

Irish Immigrants in McLean County, Illinois

Edited by

Greg Koos



MCLEAN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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FOREWORD

Local history is, after all, the story of people, their lives and their doings. In people of the past we may see the struggles and potential of our own lives played out in a different era. This collection of essays presents the lives of people who left Ireland during the time of her greatest trouble, the Famine of 1847-1850, and ended up in McLean County. The lives of the many of these first Irish migrants were cut short by disease and exhaustion experienced while building the Chicago and Alton Railroad.

As a tribute to the lives and contributions of these railroad workers the McLean County Historical Society has erected a monument at Funks Grove Cemetery marking the mass grave of over 50 workers who died in the construction season of 1852-53. The Society published this set of historical papers to commemorate their deaths. This monument and the funds for this publication were raised by a committee composed of Dan Brady, Jim Boylan, Tim Flynn, Terry Irvin, Greg Koos, Robert Koos (chair), Jim Larkin, Mike Matejka, John Jordan Moore, Laura Reardon, Mike Sweeney, and Tom Whalen.

This collection of papers presents accounts of the Irish-American experience in McLean County. Most research on Irish people in the United States has focused upon urban communities such as Chicago and New York. Tens of thousands of Irish people passed through those communities and established small communities on farms, in towns and in small cities across the Midwest. This collection provides a sample of the kind of historical work possible in these communities. Included are scholarly papers and family narratives. The Society intends to continue research on this topic.

We are grateful to the professional and avocational historians who contributed to this work. Mark Wyman, "The Irish as American Industrial Pioneers" is Professor of History at Illinois State University. He explored migration into the Midwest in his 1984 study *Immigrants in the Valley: Irish, Germans, and Americans in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1830-1860*. Mike Matejka, "Building a Railroad: 1850s Irish Immigrant Labor in Central Illinois" and "Irish Immigrant Son Patrick Morrissey Built Rail Brotherhood," is the Director of North Central Illinois Laborers' and Employers' Cooperation and Education Trust. He recently completed a Master's Degree in Labor Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. His degree

project included the exhibit "Made in McLean County." Stephen C. Funk is a life-long resident of McLean County and is a descendant of the Funk Family who graciously allowed the Irish to bury their dead in the family grave yard. L. Jane Canfield, "Grandmother's Reminiscence on the Irish Railroad Workers," acknowledges the research of Dr. Helen K. Smith of Bradenton, Florida, on the Irish Railroad workers. Rev. John J. Burke (1857-1945), "The Irish in McLean County," was Pastor of St. Patrick's Church in Bloomington from 1892 to 1901. Cynthia L. Baer, "The Labor of Irish Women in Nineteenth Century Bloomington-Normal: A Portrait Painted through the Writings of Sarah Davis and Helen Ross Hall," is a historian with the American Resources Group in Carbondale, Illinois. Her master's thesis at Illinois State University, "Irish Women in Bloomington-Normal During the Nineteenth Century: A Community Study" received the Helen M. Cavanagh Award for Best Master's Thesis in American History for the academic year 1993-94. Mark T. Dunn, "Irish-American Organizations in Bloomington in the 1880s," a long-time resident of McLean County, is a partner in the Dunn Law Firm. He is a graduate of the College of Law of The University of Notre Dame. His paper is part of a longer study on his family history. John Jordan Moore, "The American Hartnett Family," a life-long resident of McLean County, was employed by the Corporate Law Department of State Farm Insurance Company. He is a graduate of the College of Law, University of Illinois. His paper is part of a longer work on family history. Jean McCrossin, who conducted the interview with Julia Larkin Sullivan, is a volunteer at the McLean County Museum of History and is a granddaughter of Helen Ross Hall.

This work would not have been possible without the services of many people associated with the Society. Bill LaBounty designed this book, advised the editor on format, scanned images and developed printers specifications. Pat Hamilton and "Pete" Hawks assisted in research, fact verification and conducted searches for images to be used herein. Dave Hauman kept track of the donations which supported this project. Joyce Burns assisted by transcribing manuscripts for publication, Jean McCrossin and Ed McLean proof-read the galleys. Larry LaBounty of Pantagraph Printing & Stationery, did his usual excellent job ensuring a good piece of work at a fair price.

GJK 4-5-00

The Irish as American Industrial Pioneers

By Mark Wyman

McLean County was part of a tributary stream within the tide of Irish emigration to the United States that rose rapidly after 1820 and burst into a flood in the 1840s. Although Irish men and women had been coming to the New World since early Colonial times, during the decade of the 1840s their numbers exploded until their total reached 45 per cent of all immigrants entering the United States. In the 1850s the Irish influx hit its all-time peak of 914,119.

The potato famine provided the impetus for the massive exodus. Originating on America's East Coast, the blight jumped the Atlantic and appeared on the European Continent by 1845, when it began showing up in some Irish potato plots in September. Localized potato diseases were common, however, and so hopes were high in 1846 that all would go well, and a priest traveling from Cork to Dublin in late July reported that the potatoes appeared "in all the luxuriance of an abundant harvest." But when he returned a week later, "I beheld with sorrow one wide waste of putrefying vegetation."

As the blight spread the peasantry struggled to hold on to life. Many landlords used the occasion to remove their cotters and laborers and to modernize their holdings, sometimes paying emigration costs to be rid of tenants. In the end, from 1845-51 Ireland's population fell by two million—half to disease and other conditions brought by the famine, half to emigration. "[T]he once populous district of Thurles, and various other parts of Tipperary, appear to be almost totally deserted," a report stated in 1851, adding that a Mayo landowner showed the "utmost alarm" over "the prospect of the country being left without sufficient hands to till the ground. From Westport and Castelebar shopkeepers, farmers, and able bodied laborers are flying as if from a plague . . ." An observer wrote that "All Ireland is in motion," and described his journey out of Dublin: "On my route I met the people in gangs of from 40 to 60, in all



Digging for potatoes, famine victims sought futilely for potatoes which had not rotted, *Illustrated London News* 1849

directions, wending their way to the coast to emigrate for America."

To North America they came by the thousands, differing from earlier travelers out of Ireland in their extreme poverty. While later generations



Between the decks famine migrants fled Ireland on the "coffin ships," so named for the high death rates of passengers. *Illustrated London News*, July 6, 1850

would see large numbers of Irish females emigrate, the famine emigration was overwhelmingly male and heavily made up of the unskilled; up to 75 per cent were classed as laborers. And they looked on their leave-taking as something ultimately caused by the British colonial occupiers: as historian Kerby Miller argues, "Catholic Ireland and Irish-America emerged from the Famine's terrible crucible more vehemently and unanimously opposed to Protestant England and its Irish representatives than ever before."

They arrived in desperation. An emigration officer in Canada in 1849 watched an emigrant brig arrive from Limerick, its "miserable and emaciated" passengers suffering from fever and dysentery. "In my whole experience I have rarely seen a more dirty, reckless, and apparently lawless set of people . . .," he reported. This experience—showing both the horrible condition of the immigrants, and the antagonism of officialdom—would be repeated often in coming years.

Such people needed paying jobs, immediately, and America was ready to provide them. For it was the era of "internal improvements," as the westward-rolling people crossed the Appalachians, marched through Cumberland Gap, and pushed into the Mississippi Valley. The Erie Canal, connecting Albany and Buffalo across New York State, employed nearly 5,000 Irishmen on its crews before its 1825 completion, and four years later the contractors on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal even went to Ireland to recruit. The National Road, the Wabash-Erie Canal in Indiana, and similar projects quickly relied on the muscle

of Irish immigrants.

Although some Irishmen went directly into farming as owners or laborers, most who came would help create America's Internal Improvements. They were pioneers, but pioneers of a different sort: *industrial* pioneers—confronting both a new land and a new system of economic organization. The Illinois and Michigan Canal, connecting the Illinois River at its La Salle rapids with the Chicago River, quickly ran into labor shortages when it was launched in 1836 as the newest project on the American frontier. One official saw a solution, in the process revealing the employer's advantage in bringing laborers into largely-uninhabited districts:

I am told there are thousands of laborers in New-York and the Canadas wholly out of employment and seeking it. This then would be a favorable time to go east to recruit as, in consequence of the hardness of the times there, they could be brought to the Canal with more facility and less cost than they could at another time. And having them here a change in the moneyed matters could not affect us.

By December 1837 some 1,700 men were employed, with more arriving in following months. They staged Illinois' first labor strikes to win better treatment. But the national Panic of 1837 reached Illinois in 1838 and the Legislature found itself unable to meet its obligations. To pay off workers, state scrip was issued, good for pur-

chasing state lands; as a result, large numbers of Irishmen bought farms along the canal corridor. The work was resumed in 1846 and the Illinois and Michigan Canal was completed in 1848.

This new influx of Irish, associated with the canal's work and its use in transporting farm produce and people, was part of a growing westward stream. Because of it, Illinois moved from 20th in total population in 1830, when the census counted 157,445 people, to fourth place by 1860 with 1.7 million. Chicago, at the canal's Lake Michigan connection, attracted many Irish men and women; their total of 6,096 in 1850 made them the city's largest foreign-born group (there were 13,693 native-born Americans and 5,035 Germans). And St. Patrick's Day became their grand celebration.

It was the arrival of the railroad in the early 1850s that fueled the next massive thrust of Irish immigration into the Midwest. Travelers heading westward now had other conveyances besides Great Lakes schooners or steamers, Ohio River flatboats, stagecoaches, and wagons. But the new railroad also created an enormous demand for workers, especially for the Illinois Central Railroad, which became the largest private construction project in U.S. history when it was approved in 1850 with a Congressional land grant, the line reaching ultimately from Chicago to the Gulf of Mexico.

The IC saw immediately that finding adequate numbers of workers would be a key challenge. "Come along, strangers," the line's advertisements invited. "Come forward and assist in laying this mighty track," receiving the "bountiful monthly dispensations of the contractors" as wages. And eventually, "when the road is finished, purchase a farm, marry a wife, and dwell contented under . . . [your] own vine and fig tree."

Soon recruiters swarmed over the Eastern ports, lining up workers through the Irish Emigrant Society and other immigrant organizations, paying their way to Chicago over the new eastern lines already completed. Chief Engineer Roswell B. Mason, a former mayor of Chicago, divided the project into seven general divisions. When the line reached Bloomington in the summer of 1853 there were some 8,000 laborers at work on the Illinois Central. It was finished within Illinois in 1856, and other lines were crisscrossing the state by then and seeking workers.

WANTED! **3,000 LABORERS**

On the 12th Division of the
ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD

Wages, \$1.25 per Day.

Fare, from New-York, only - - \$4.75

By Railroad and Steamboat, to the work in the
State of Illinois.

Constant employment for two years or more
given. Good board can be obtained at two
dollars per week.

This is a rare chance for persons to go
West, being sure of permanent employment
in a healthy climate, where land can be
bought cheap, and for fertility is not surpassed
in any part of the Union.

Men with families preferred.

For further information in regard to it, call
at the Central Railroad Office,

173 BROADWAY,

CORNER OF COURTLANDT ST.

NEW-YORK.

R. B. MASON, Chief Engineer.

H. PHELPS, AGENT,

JULY, 1853.

Illinois Central Railroad Advertisement, 1853

Contractors had difficulties keeping crews with daily wages of 75 cents to \$1 for laborers and \$1.50 for experienced track layers, the eleven- and twelve-hour days fitted into six-day work weeks. Soon some sections were forced to pay \$1.50 for laborers and up to \$2.50 for tracklayers.

Workers had other kinds of problems as they labored along the new rail lines. Cave-ins were a constant danger in some areas: an Irishman and a German were buried alive in 1854 while shoveling through a thirty-foot bank as they worked on the IC line just south of Bloomington. Construction trains were unwieldy and sometimes crashed as they delivered supplies. Another problem, common to frontier labor, was delayed paydays. Frequently wages arrived months late, by which

time many workers had given up and moved on. And sometimes it was simply NO paydays, because contractors had absconded. Decatur residents woke up one morning in 1853 to learn that three contractors in charge of the Northern Cross extension had fled, owing some \$2,000 to workers and local merchants. An IC contractor ran away from the Decatur area at the same time, "deeply indebted to our citizens."

Such incidents created tensions and fears within the Irish workforce. These feelings were in the background in late 1853 in La Salle, when a predominantly Irish crew building the IC's bridge over the Illinois River faced a sudden reduction in their wages—wages which had been promised as a means of luring them to labor in Illinois. Many quit, then returned on payday to receive what they had earned before leaving. But the contractor felt threatened by the crush of frustrated laborers and shot a workman named Ryan, killing him. As the contractor rushed to his horse he uttered a poorly-worded challenge that he was "man enough for a hundred Irishmen." They jumped on him and crushed him with stones, picks, and shovels.

The Chicago Tribune responded: "Why do our police reports always average two representatives from 'Erin, the soft green isle of the ocean,' to one from almost any other inhabitable land of the earth? . . . Why are the instigators and ringleaders of our riots and tumults, in nine cases out of ten, Irishmen?" (To which the Western Tablet, an Irish Catholic newspaper in Chicago, answered: "If you wish to put a stop to these disgraceful scenes, let out your public works to honest contractors, who will pay their laborers for their work."

Wages and cave-ins were only part of the immigrant laborers' troubles in Illinois, for there was also the summer heat. "The men do not work harder here than in Ireland," Daniel Murphy wrote home from Ottawa in 1849, "but the weather is so hot it is more severe on them as you can hardly think but the perspiration will be running down your body."

Summer heat, swampy prairie, and the workers' crowded shanties proved an ideal mix for the spread of disease. The frontier's common illness was ague, a form of malaria, and Illinois Central records reveal considerable supplies of quinine purchased for the railroad construction crews. But soon a more serious disease made its reappearance: cholera.

Cholera had swept into the Midwest in 1832, carried by troops heading West to fight in the Black Hawk War in the Illinois-Wisconsin lead region. Short years later it reappeared among the canal crews, wiping out hundreds of shanty-dwellers and causing a La Salle priest to report, "The plague-stricken region was, with hardly an exception, Catholic. . . ." When the railroad era began cholera returned. An Alton man reported to his father that his area had some cholera deaths but "nothing however to excite alarm and mainly among new Emigrant laborers on the Rail Road." It was they who drank impure water, shared dippers and jugs, slept in crowded shanties. It proved virulent in 1852, wiping out sixteen members of an Irish crew near La Salle in August; it was still a scourge along the rail lines in 1855 when it killed fifty men working on the Terre Haute and Alton Road over the Okaw River near Shelbyville.

Cholera's suddenness is terrifying. A Freeport man reported an attack near there: ". . . [T]wenty-four men who had been working on the Railroad took dinner and ate very heartily—being to all appearances

From the Chicago *Western Tablet*, October 30, 1852

The Ill Central R.R. Co.
And their Agent

To the Editor of the
Western Tablet:

Sir,---In your paper of last week, I observe a letter from H. Phelps, in reply to a statement drawn up by J. W. Miller and others, in which they charge Phelps with having employed them as carpenters at the rate of \$2 and \$2.50 per day. This statement is denied by Phelps, in his letter. Whether he employed those men or not, I cannot say; but I wish to give you a statement, true and fair, of the way I was employed, and the terms on which I left New York for Chicago. Being in New York city, I saw an advertisement in the Sun, for carpenters and others to work on the Illinois Central Railroad---apply to H. Phelps, 75 Greenwich-street. Being a carpenter, I went there, and Phelps positively asserted that I would have \$2 per day, and that boarding could be had from \$1.25 to \$1.50. On such engagement I left New York for this city; but you may judge of my surprise when I found out that no carpenters were wanted. Without complaining, however, I pawned my baggage for money sufficient to pay my passage to some of the sections of the road under contract, and went beyond Blue Island, but could find no work at my trade, nor even any prospect of work; and in order to pay my way back to Chicago, I had to work three days as a common laborer. This I can prove to be true by several witnesses. I give my name and address, and am willing to confront Phelps at any time.

JOHN KELLY
Chicago, Oct. 25, 1852

188 Monroe-st.

sound in health – When lo ere the sun had set all had closed their eyes in death – Cholera was the cause.” No cure appeared; people fled from communities throughout Illinois and burned piles of wood to purify the atmosphere. The Illinois Central’s chief engineer reported after an Eastern trip in 1853 that it was common talk there that life expectancy in Illinois was no more than six months. Cholera is mentioned in oral traditions as the cause of the deaths of workmen buried in the mass grave in Funks Grove Cemetery near Bloomington.

In addition to struggling with cholera and absconding contractors, it was the misfortune of the Irish railroad workers to arrive as America’s most turbulent reform period was underway. Major Protestant churches starting in the 1830s had begun working feverishly in campaigns to label drinking alcohol as a sin, and to call for an end to desecration of the Sabbath—meaning that no Sunday activity was to be allowed except going to church and praying around the family altar. Originating in New England but soon spreading across the North in a kind of interlocking “benevolent empire,” the reformers sought to change many aspects of American life besides drinking and Sunday recreation: their list of targets included dancing, cigarette smoking, prostitution, parochial schools. In the 1850s many of these reformers moved into the abolitionist wing of anti-slavery. All were displeased by the “infidel emigration.”

These movements clashed most heatedly with Irish railroad workers, who valued their day of rest and recreation on Sundays, hanging around the “groggeries” which often appeared near the crews’ shantytowns. Visiting priests were known to join them for a drink, raising Irish doubts about whether such activities could be classed as sinful. The American Home Missionary Society’s 1853 report on Illinois sadly noted that the “vast schemes of internal improvement” were bringing “new temptations to Sabbath desecration, and other forms of vice,” inviting “immigration of the worst class. . . .” Temperance action went beyond holding church rallies, as when a Bloomington mob broke into three “groceries” run by Irishmen and smashed barrels of whiskey. The North-Western Christian Advocate of Chicago ridiculed an immigrant counter-rally by noting the “Red noses, carbuncled cheeks, watery eyes, scarred lips, bloated forms, and uncombed heads, with loathsome breaths, expired in the utterance of horrible profanity, pronounced with a trans-Atlantic accent. . . .” The fact that a Roman Catholic anti-alcohol movement, the Catholic Sons of Temperance, was also holding massive parades did not blunt the reformers’ charge that the immigrants were un-Christian and un-American. In 1855 the anti-immigrant American Party (or “Know Nothings”) won the mayoralty election in Chicago, part of a nationwide swing against the immigrant that only declined when it was replaced in American emotions by the anti-slavery crusade.

The various groups pouring into Illinois—Irishmen and Yankees, Southerners and Germans—eventually reached an accommodation. The immigrants’ “continental Sunday” won out in public acceptance, and their heroics in defending the Union during the Civil War helped squelch the critics.

Further, the Irish could point with pride to their role in transforming the prairie state and the Mississippi Valley, an argument proclaimed by an Irish missionary priest visiting Chicago. “He is a fine Preacher and told

From the Chicago *Western Tablet* November 13, 1852

“Laborers Wanted!!”

To the Editor of the *Western Tablet*

Sir:—Patrick Watson called on me and said he had traveled from New York to Chicago intending to enlist among the “three thousand men now wanted” on the railroad. According to his statement, he had been directed, by some man in Chicago, to proceed to Rockford; thence he was sent to Freeport; but in neither of these towns did he find the wished for employment. He had, as he states, to pay his own expenses from Rockford to Freeport, (Who paid his expenses from Chicago to Rockford? Or who directed him from Chicago? Give us the name or names, and investigation shall be made.---Ed.)

It is time that such humbug should be put an end to. God knows, the “poor exiles of Erin” are gulled and fleeced enough by the vultures and harpies of New York, without being cozened by cheating advertisements of “three thousand men wanted on the railroad.” Is it not enough that cruelty is perpetrated on the unfortunate laborers now working on the railroad---victims I had almost said, who are worse treated than the slaves at the South! The manner in which they are dealt with, I shall endeavor to explain at another time.

As to Patrick Watson, I hope his wild-geese-chase will warn others to reflect that where one Patrick had so poor a chance, three thousand Patricks immigrating to Illinois would make the chance three thousand times worse!

I conversed with the afore-said Watson at Belvidere last Friday, and, feeling interested in his case, determined to trouble you with these few lines.

Yours, &c.,
Patrick.

the Yankees what the Irish were and what the English were also . . . ,” a listener wrote. “To hear him talk you would think it was the great sinewy arm of the Irishman done everything in America, made their rail roads, dug their canals, stopped the great Mississippi – in fact it was they done everything.”

The priest’s argument was only slightly exaggerated. The early Irish presence in Illinois, whether in digging canals, constructing railroads, or opening farms, helped prepare the crucial infrastructure for the growth of one of the nation’s most important states.

Building a Railroad: 1850s Irish Immigrant Labor in Central Illinois

by Mike Matejka

The shovel's scrape and the spike hammer's metallic ring marked the railroad builders' life. Although the railroad was the 19th century's most important and newest technology, its construction methods were centuries old and dependent upon a key ingredient — the back breaking work and sweat of a man. In the rural cemetery at Funks Grove, Illinois, are two mass burials of Irish laborers from the early 1850s, probable casualties of rail construction. Uncovering the specific conditions of the workers buried at Funks Grove are difficult, but much is known about the brutal conditions these immigrant workers faced and the infectious diseases that challenged their already precarious position.

Building a railroad network through rural Illinois in the 1850s meant incredible logistical efforts. Streams and rivers needed bridging, wooden ties were cut, sawn and hewed, iron rails, spikes, tie plates, shovel, picks and mauls were imported from eastern cities or across the ocean from English foundries, spending months in water passage before reaching the rail head, where they were assembled by work crews.

And in sparsely settled Illinois, the other critical component needing importation was labor.

The farms and small towns did not support a ready labor pool — that also came across the ocean. Germans fled repression following the failed revolts of 1848; many of these individuals were skilled tradesmen or educated professionals, and thus had marketable skills. Scandinavian

immigrants were already known in Illinois, but their biggest exodus would come after the Civil War. Famine ravaged Irish families became the key foundation for pre-Civil War railroad and canal building in America. Seventy-five cents to \$1.50 a day was the standard wage rate, minus room, board and other expenses.

"Railroad Fever" inflamed 1850s Illinois communities, feeding the need for imported laborers. In 1850 there were 110 miles

*A light car, drawn by a single horse,
gallops up to the end of a rail and starts forward,
the rest of the gang taking hold by twos,
until it is clear of the car.*

They come forward at a run.

*At a word of command the rail is dropped
in its place, right side up with care,
while the same process goes on at the
other side of the car.*

*Less than thirty seconds to a rail for each gang,
and so four rails go down in a minute....*

*Close behind the first gang come the gaugers,
spikers and bolters, and a lively time they
make of it.*

It is a grand 'anvil chorus.'

*It is played in triple time,
three strokes to the spike.*

There are ten spikes to a rail, 400 rails to a mile.

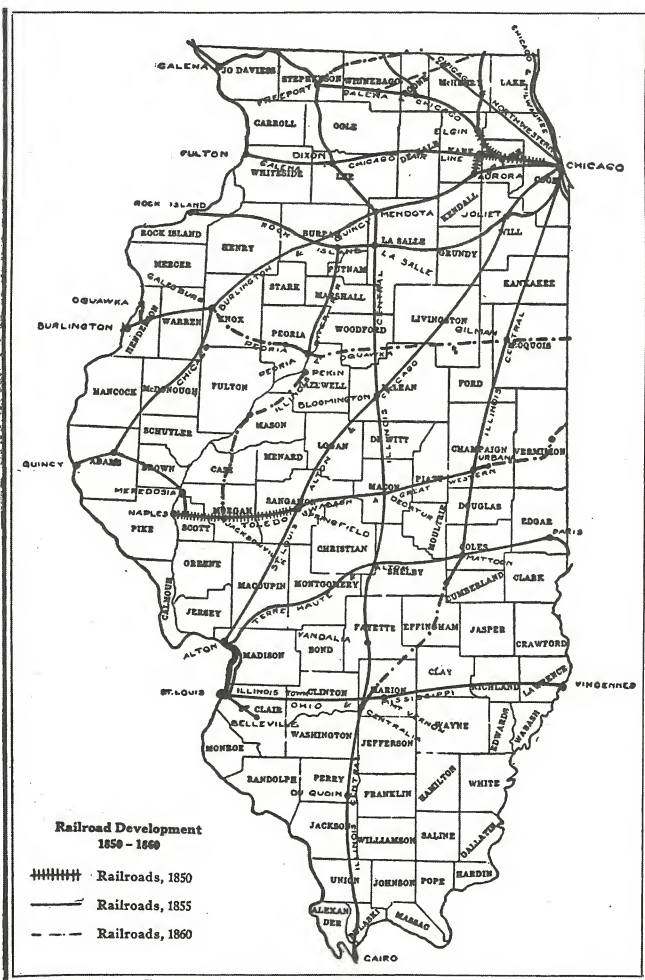
(Late 1860s description of the construction of the
Union Pacific Railroad.)

of Illinois railroad. Ten years later there were 2,867 miles, making Illinois the nation's most railroad intensive state, establishing Chicago as the nation's rail center. What was then the world's largest construction project, the Illinois Central Railroad, laid 700 miles of north-south track in two separate lines across the state. The Great Western (Wabash) built from Danville to Jacksonville. The Chicago and Rock Island was connecting those two cities, while the

Burlington and Quincy reached from Chicago into Iowa and Missouri. The Michigan Central was connecting Chicago with New York.¹

The river town of Alton, its prosperity linked to St. Louis and the Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri rivers, saw increased opportunity in a direct link across the open prairies to Chicago, tapping farm-lands and communities that were not on river systems and building an all-weather link between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi. Incorporated in 1847, the Alton and Sangamon Railroad (A&S) built first to Springfield and eventually to Bloomington and onto Chicago.

Communities eagerly awaited the new lines, sure their presence would guarantee economic prosperity and access to wider markets. As the Alton and Sangamon completed its initial stage, from the river city to the state's capitol, Springfield eagerly projected its coming wealth.



Illinois Railroad Development 1850-60, originally published in *The Centennial History of Illinois*, Vol. 3, *The Era of the Civil War*, by Arthur Charles Cole, Springfield 1919

Looking at the recently completed 1850 census for agricultural data, Springfield's *Daily Journal* quoted the *American Railroad Journal* in meticulous detail, enumerating the produce and cattle raised within 15 miles of the new line. Totaling the projected freight, mail and passenger traffic, minus the construction and operating costs, the *Journal* predicted the new line would have an initial annual profit of 18 percent, or \$188,640. By projecting the new line north into Bloomington and a connection with the Illinois Central, Springfield would mark its course along an important corridor of commerce:

We may set it down as a fixed fact that the Central road will be completed, at an early date. Bloomington, a town about sixty miles north of Springfield, is to be a point in this road. From the latter place, active measurement are in progress for the construction of a railroad to the former. ...A line neatly drawn from Chicago to St. Louis would very nearly pass through the three towns of Alton, Springfield and Bloomington.The Alton and Sangamon must, therefore, for aught we can see, forever constitute the lower and most profitable part of the main trunk line between Lake Michigan and Springfield, Alton and St. Louis.²

This railroad construction boom fueled the need for workers, and the largest construction project, the Illinois Central, advertised in port cities New Orleans and New York, offering \$1.25 a day and a transportation rate of \$4.75 to procure workers. By the winter of 1852-53 6,000 to 8,000 laborers were on the Illinois Central's payroll, with thousands of them recruited in eastern ports. Germans made up a substantial number, but the greatest number were Irish.³

Railroad Construction

Railroad work proceeded in a number of stages. First the right-of-way was surveyed and land acquired. The actual roadbed was then graded and established, including the construction of bridges, earthen fills and excavations. Finally, the ties were laid with the iron rail spiked to them, at a rate of approximately one mile per day. If the construction was being done properly, a layer of rock or sand ballast completed the line. Although



Building the Illinois Central Railroad, 1854

horse and oxen teams could aid in the grading and transportation of dirt and the newly completed railroad would transport material to the end of track, much of the work was back-breaking hand labor.

The actual roadbed was hand dug, along with any excavations or fills. Workers labored in creeks or waterways to establish bridges and crossings. Once the heavy cross ties were placed, the iron rails were hand carried and connected to the previous rail. They were hand-bolted to the adjoining rail and the spikes were hand-driven. Ballast or fill was then hand-shoveled into the rails, while workers leaning on heavy metal track bars helped align the track.

In July 1851 the *Daily Journal* reported in detail the construction technical specifics, the A&S's second building season. The paper praised the new line's first actual ten miles of rail from Alton:

...at the present time there are twenty-eight miles graded and nineteen miles in addition nearly completed; over ten miles of the track is permanently laid; and from one and a half to two miles is being laid weekly. The ties and iron for over one half of the road are upon the ground; and the balance of the ties and iron are being received — (the ties from Cumberland River, and the iron from New Orleans, where they are in readiness for shipment.) The ties are all of red cedar, except every

seventh or 'spike tie,' is of white or post oak, and of double size. The ties are acknowledged by all to be the finest ever laid. The iron is the H rail, weighing a fraction over fifty-six pounds per yard. The ties are laid thirty inches from centre to centre. The masonry thus far has been of the best character, and has attracted the attention of everyone who has visited the work.⁴

As Springfield residents eagerly awaited the railroad's fall 1852 arrival, grading commenced northward toward Bloomington. The northern survey was completed by July 1851 and the following summer the now named "Chicago and Mississippi Railroad" was advertising for contractors to grade and bridge the extension from Springfield to Bloomington, divided into two miles sections per contract. The contracts called for all but the actual track laying, asking "Rail-Road Contractors" to bid, for cash payment, for the "grading, masonry, bridging and cross-ties of that division of this road extending from Springfield to Bloomington."⁵ That spring the Illinois Central was building southward from LaSalle to Bloomington. Bloomington's David Davis reported that 25 workers were already at work with another 250 expected shortly.⁶

Meanwhile, the quest for labor continued. The Springfield paper quoted the Alton *Telegraph* in October 1852 that 4,000 - 6,000 laborers arrived in St. Louis, recruited from Buffalo, New York at

a transportation cost of \$5 each, to aid in constructing Illinois and Missouri railroads.⁷

As Springfield had awaited the line the previous summer, 1853 was Bloomington's turn to anxiously watch the construction progress. By August 1853 the line reached Lincoln, after long delays in constructing a Sangamon River bridge. The Springfield paper's correspondent rode along on the daily supply train, ferrying materiel north to the rail head, marveling at the changed landscape the new line wrought; he also noted the mechanics maintaining the locomotives at Springfield's roundhouse, characterizing them as from the eastern U.S. and worth a visit from the capitol city's "fair damsels;" on the new line he found:

We shall not fail to mark the more recent indications of our new rail road, the long cuts; the forests strewn as if by the breath of a tornado; the new bridges; high water tanks; well places dug; shantees 'to let'; relics of 'auld dacency'; corn fields invaded; the ambitious weeds; fences not up; 'Pat' taking a rest; and herds in a fright, as the steam horse is screaming and rushing on over its iron path.⁸

Despite severe weather in 1852-53, grading continued throughout the winter months. Construction of a branch to Peoria from Bloomington was contemplated. As track was laid, grading crews continued northward from Bloomington to Wilmington, already at work on the next extension. Bloomington anticipated the railroad and its promised prosperity throughout 1852. Writing in the Bloomington *Intelligencer*, Jesse Fell promoted the line's importance:

...it becomes emphatically *the road* of the State. This, we are happy to know, has become the general, if not unanimous opinion, of intelligent observers, not only of the West, but of the whole country. How can it be otherwise when we reflect that Chicago on the one hand, and St. Louis on the other, are the great commercial centers of this part, if not indeed of the whole Mississippi Valley; and that this road will constitute the nearest practicable

connection between those two great cities? Looking at it from this point of view alonethe Chicago & Alton road assumes an importance that does not attach to any other road.⁹

By the fall of 1853 the A&S reached Bloomington, which the Illinois Central reached the previous spring. The *Intelligencer* rhapsodized about the new rail connection. It praised the Alton road's engineer O.H. Lee, contrasting that firm's demeanor in comparison to the Illinois Central, which the paper accused of being "controlled by land sharks and town-lot speculators." With the two rail lines meeting in Bloomington, a rail trip was possible between Chicago and St. Louis, though it was laborious. The passenger would leave Chicago on the Chicago and Rock Island; disembark at LaSalle and switch to the Illinois Central for Bloomington; after a carriage ride across Bloomington the passenger would board the new A&S to Alton; and from there a Mississippi River packet boat would complete the journey to St. Louis. The *Intelligencer* celebrated not only the Chicago - St. Louis connection through Bloomington, but the new access to the east coast afforded through Chicago:

The connexion is had! The work is consummated! For the first time in the world's history, a continuous track is opened up for the Iron Horse, between the great commercial cities of the East and the mighty Father of Waters!! — Starting on the eastern shore of that majestic river, in fifty hours thereafter he can slake his thirst in the great Atlantic! What a mighty achievement! How striking the commentary on the age we live in! In what bold relief does it present the genius and indomitable energy of the American people!¹⁰

Even before the line's completion into Bloomington, the *State Register* was marking new economic activity along the new line: "In anticipation of the opening of the improvements, immigrants are flocking to all points contiguous to the road. Lands are advancing in price, villages are growing, and universal prosperity prevails."¹¹

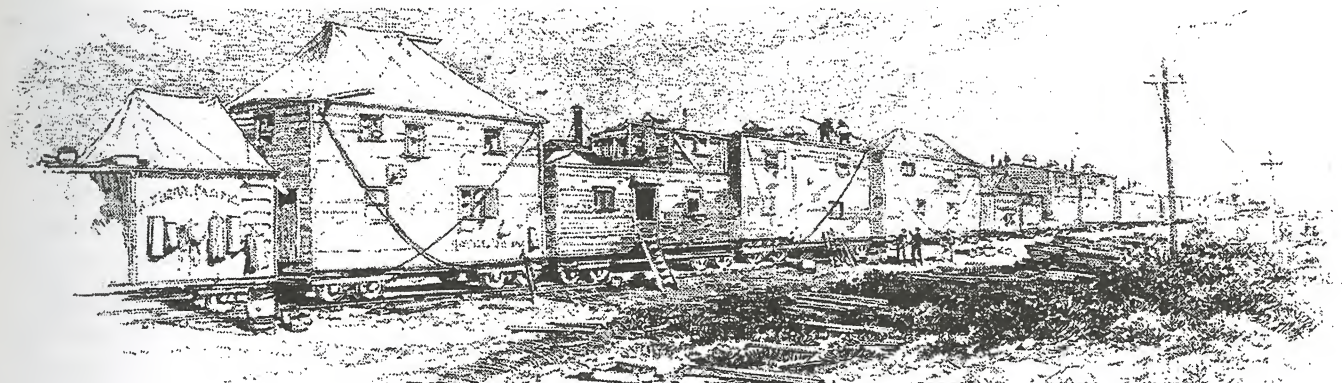
On October 19, as the newspaper was celebrating the road's opening, a fatal derailment marred the celebratory air. The train hit two cows on the tracks, derailing the locomotive and throwing it and the train 15 feet down an embankment. The engineer, Mr. Bramwell, suffered numerous broken bones and the fireman, George Smith, was scalded to death by the steam. A second, unnamed fireman was decapitated in the accident. No passengers were injured.¹² By August of the following year, the rails were extended from Bloomington to Joliet, where a connection was made into Chicago.

Workers' Diet and Housing

For all of the detailed construction accounts, the daily progress of the track marked, little is said of the workers who actually completed the lines. If accident or illness took their life, rarely is a specific name listed in newspaper accounts; usually the workers are referred to by their ethnic

What Gates misses in his stereotypes is the context of the immigrant's life and the reasons why an Irish immigrant might be a "mite resentful" at times. Uprooted from a traditional homeland by landlords beholden to colonial British power; surviving a perilous ocean voyage; and finally, intensive labor at low wages in a not-always welcoming land were all ingredients for rebellion and reaction. Although the railroad needed their labor, established local communities did not necessarily welcome immigrant labor. The early 1850s were the height of the political power for the nativist "Know-Nothing" party, an anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic movement that emerged in reaction to growing Irish and other European immigrants.

After facing all these travel and social obstacles, the immigrant laborer then experienced intensive hand-labor with crude tools, building a smooth right-of-way for the new railways by his back-breaking work. Swedish immigrant Hans



Railroad construction workers housing, 1883, published in Harper's Weekly, 1883

origin, as either an "Irishman" or a "German."

Writing in 1934, Bucknell University professor Paul Wallace Gates reflected many of the previous century's Irish stereotypes in his history of the Illinois Central. Gates wrote:

When construction began most of the laborers were Irish, and they were important as a laboring force throughout. They were, however, a turbulent lot, fond of whiskey, prone to fight, and anything but docile. Their frequent outbreaks in riot and violence made them unpopular with the natives of Illinois, and the high labor turnover among this racial group caused a great deal of annoyance and delay to the Illinois Central.¹³

Mattson left this memorable story about his 1852 efforts to help bridge an Illinois river for a new railroad:

During my healthy days I stood on the bottom of Rock River from seven o'clock in the morning until seven at night, throwing wet sand with a shovel onto a platform above, from which it is thrown onto another, and from there to terra firma. The most disagreeable part of the business was that one-quarter of each shovelful came back on the head of the operator... After a couple of weeks the company's paymaster came along, and upon settling my board bill (\$1.50 a week) and deducting for the days I spent in bed, shaking with ague and

fever, I made the discovery that I was able to earn only fifteen cents net per week in building railroad bridges.¹⁴

When not on the job with pick, shovel or spike maul, the railroader repaired to either a camp car or a track side hut. The track laying gang had a mobile home, a converted box car with bunks and a kitchen where the worker rested for the next day's labor, pushed to the end of track each day. Those grading or excavating probably inhabited a track side shanties, a word derived from the Irish word "shantee," meaning "old house." The *Illinois Journal* included a description of the rail camp cars and the crew that was laying track into Bloomington in 1853:

Mr. W.W. Carson, the Contractor for laying the track, is progressing rapidly with his work. His entire force will consist of nearly one hundred persons, who live in cars fitted for the purpose of boarding the men, which are pushed along as the rails are laid; — thus securing the important advantage of always having his own men near their work. This locomotive board house or village compromises some fifteen large covered cars, with all the necessary conveniences for cooking, eating and sleeping.¹⁵

Railroad construction was an opportunity for area merchants and farmers, supplying food to the rail crews. Moore's Mill, a McLean County grain mill, sold flour to the railroad construction contractors. The railroad also proved the water mill's undoing, as improved transportation changed the market for wheat flour, put Moore out of the wheat flour business by 1860.¹⁶ John Busher advertises in *Springfield Daily Journal* in 1852 that he has "Beef, Fresh and Corned," available for daily delivery "at any of the shanties for twenty miles along the line."¹⁷

These crude conditions continued for railroad builders for years. Thirty years later, when the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad was building through Colorado, a local reporter noted his visit to an 1880s camp car during the evening meal, as immigrant workers poured in from a long day's labor:

There were swarthy Italians, Irishmen with carrotty locks — men of a score of nationalities, begrimed, tattered, gnawed at by the appetite given by labor in the bracing Colorado air. They swarmed into the old freight cars which had been fitted up with long planks for benches and tables. On the tables were tin pannikins, iron knives and forks, and pewter spoons. Mounds of coarse bread, pans of some strange stew, and pots of rank black tea



Evening Meal, Bill Yund illustration

appeared and disappeared. Words were not wasted. Every act had a bearing upon the business of satisfying hunger....

It was a sample of a hard, cheerless life that I had seen; but as I turned to go back to the construction train, someone struck up a rollicking Irish song, and others joined until the canyon walls gave back the chorus.¹⁸

What the laborers of the 1850s ate is not readily apparent, though one hint is classified advertising of the time period, calling for bids to provide foodstuffs to the work camps. There were calls to sell beef and pork to the railroad company and their contractors. Perhaps this is where the Funk family, prominent McLean County hog farmers at the time, first made their acquaintance with the rail workers and helped build the connection which led to the burials at Funks Grove cemetery. The Funks also purchased land from the Illinois Central. Between 1848-51 the family acquired over 3,000 acres and between 1853-1863 4,713 acres. Much of the later purchase was from the rail company.

Another hint at housing conditions is found in an excerpt from the famous American philosopher, Henry David Thoreau, in his 1854 work, "Walden." Thoreau bought the wood for his famous cabin on Massachusetts's Walden Pond from an Irish family settled along the Boston and Fitchburg railroad. Thoreau wondered about the new railroad and its promises of prosperity, while it left those who built it in poverty:

I should not need to look farther than to the shanties which everywhere border our railroads, that last improvement in civilization; where I see in my daily walks human beings living in sties, and all winter with an open door, for the sake of light, without any visible, often imaginable wood-pile, and the forms of both young and old are permanently contracted by the long habit of shrinking from cold and misery, and the development of their limbs and faculties is checked. It certainly is fair to look at that class by whose labor the works which distinguishes this generation are accomplished.¹⁹

Poor housing, over-exertion at work and poor diet could often lead to disease, particularly infectious diseases. Although the cause of death that led to the mass grave at Funks Grove Cemetery is undocumented, cholera is remembered through the local oral tradition.

Disease

An infectious, bacterial disease, cholera was little understood in 1850s America. Cholera is an acute, diarrheal illness caused by bacterial intestine infection. In an epidemic, the disease is passed by human feces which can infect water supplies. Death can occur within a few hours of exposure.

Asiatic Cholera appeared in the U.S. in 1832, brought to Illinois that summer by troops coming for the Black Hawk Wars. The disease was not a constant, but appeared irregularly, with another upsurge in 1849-50. Various ineffective patent medicines were sold for its relief and the disease was frequently blamed on "miasmas," hot weather or swampy conditions. Although these early medical theories pointed to conditions where brackish water could nourish bacteria, the connections were not apparent in the 1850s. It was a feared disease, not understood, whose outbreak could frighten a community. In 1850 Bloomington residents were warned the disease had broken out again. Chicago lost 1,184 residents in 1854 to a cholera outbreak. The 1850s newspapers report not only local outbreaks, but outbreaks in other communities. In some cases, the names of local residents infected are named, but immigrants are often referred to simply by their ethnic origin, as the *Bloomington Weekly Pantagraph* reported five cholera deaths in August 1855, noting among the victims "Mr. Joseph Clark...three of the others were Germans, one man and two women, and the other was an Irish woman."²⁰ The speed of cholera infection is apparent from an 1852 *Bloomington Intelligencer* piece about the death of William Hodges, a young man in his 30s:

The deceased arrived here in the Peoria stage, on Friday evening, apparently in the enjoyment of his accustomed health, and on Saturday morning breakfasted with his friend, Mr. Hodges, as heartily as usual. About seven o'clock, the diarrhea,

which had been arrested the previous evening, returned with such increasing violence, that notwithstanding the administration, by skillful and experienced physicians, of the most efficient remedies, aided by the most assiduous attentions on the part of those who assisted in waiting upon him, in nine hours thereafter, this terrible disease had runs its course, and its victim lay a lifeless corpse!²¹

Amongst the newspaper reports are frequent mention of cholera outbreaks in work camps along canals and railroads. The *Weekly Pantagraph* noted a story from the *Galena Jeffersonian* in August 1854 about 150 rail laborers that died of cholera in Galena. The contractor encouraged his workers to flee, but even with that half of them were killed. Reflecting current medical theories which blamed cholera or bad air or "miasmas," the newspaper wondered how these deaths could take place 450 feet above the Mississippi in a place with "ground dry and air pure."²² The Illinois Central lost 130 workers at Peru in two days in 1852, delaying construction of an Illinois River bridge.²³ The social separation between established settlers and immigrant rail workers is apparent in an 1852 *Weekly Pantagraph* article, reprinted from the *St. Louis Intelligencer*, that notes rail worker cholera deaths in the LaSalle-Peru area, but reassures the reader that the established community is safe:

Cholera — We regret to learn from the offices of the Regulator that the cholera has again made its appearance among the

laborers on the railroad and public works in the neighborhood of Peru on the Illinois. Sixteen deaths had occurred, nine at Peru and seven at LaSalle. None of the citizens had been attacked, and no great alarm was felt of the disease spreading to any great extent.²⁴

If the area newspapers mark cholera deaths, did the workers buried at Funks Grove die of cholera or some other cause? Why are there no newspaper notices of epidemics along the rail line building into Bloomington? The answer is unknown. The only existing records are the 1920s cemetery map, which marks the Irish workers' burial, and the local oral tradition, which notes the workers' death and mass burial. Two possibilities exist: one, the workers did die of cholera, dysentery, or some other infectious disease. With a new rail line building into Bloomington, the local papers ignored the deaths, fearing stirring up fear or fermenting a negative image of the new rail line. Or, because immigrant deaths were so common, as the other reports note, their deaths was beyond official recognition. Or, a second possibility is that the workers died not at once, but in smaller groups. Because of the Funk family's generosity in sharing their cemetery space, the workers had an official burial spot, rather than scattered track side graves. Thus workers over an extended period could have been added to those already interred at Funks Grove. The existence of two separate burial spots in the cemetery records may point to two separate, or multiple internments. The Funk family broke social barriers of the times in allowing Irish



Mass burial at Funks Grove, Bill Yund illustration

burials in their cemetery. Bloomington did not have a Catholic Church until 1853 and a cemetery until 1856. The reigning mayor, Franklin Price, was a "Know-Nothing," frequently attacking the growing Irish community on Bloomington's west side. Perhaps the Funks Grove cemetery was a sanctuary for the growing Irish community, until they were able to establish their own burial spot, outside city limits, in 1856. Frequent cholera outbreaks in work camps, mentioned in newspaper dispatches during this era, could have been another source for anti-immigrant antipathy. Immigrants coming into town could have been classified and stereotyped as disease carriers.

Whatever the immediate facts, there was undoubtedly some solace to these workers in a burial in an established cemetery. Immigrants in a strange and unwelcoming land, death was an immediate reminder to these workers of their poverty and isolation. Carl Sandburg quotes a song fragment in his 1920s "American Songbook," which echoes the experience of many early rail workers:

*There's many a man killed on the railroad,
the railroad, the railroad.*

*There's many a man killed on the railroad,
and laid in a lonely grave.*

Fifty years later Macedonian immigrant Stoyan Christowe remembered burying his father on the Great Plains, while working in Montana for the Great Northern Railroad. Christowe went on to success as an author and eventually a Vermont State Senator, but his poignant remembrance echoes what the 1850s Illinois Irish workers might have felt:

Slowly and silently the band of men moved across the open plain behind the coffin of rough pine boards borne by a farmer's cart. The farmer on the driver's seat, with his team of horses, alone seemed of this place.

The procession through the treeless plain was unreal and unbelievable. There was something incomplete, unfinal, about my father's death, and about his burial. This was no way to return a man to his

eternal resting place. No bell tolled; no priests in vestments swung fuming censers or intoned funeral chants. And there was no avenue lined with tall poplars and cypresses leading to a chapel shaded by ancient oaks and walnut trees. ...How my father would grieve if he knew that he had become the cause of every man in the gang losing a day's wages in order to bury him.²⁵

Resistance

Although facing adverse conditions, immigrant workers did not passively accept their situation. Already used to dogged resistance to British colonial rule and fights with absentee landlords, immigrant workers struck against poor working conditions or to force wage payment. In examining over ten work stoppages on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal between 1834-40, Peter Way credits the Irish work force with resistance skills polished for centuries against the English, transferring those skills to the American wage system: "The methods the Irish had developed at home, secret societies and collective violence, were imported to the New World and adapted to its developing capitalist social system."²⁶ Although not necessarily organizing trade unions, the early laborers depended upon collective action to right a perceived injustice. Since the rail and canal companies often used contractors for construction, these actions were often taken against contractors who were perceived to be unfair or who shorted workers' pay. Ethnic unity helped maintain a code of secrecy, where workers often took violent retribution against unpopular contractors or foremen. This is not to say the workers were continually violent, but did react to a perceived injustice. The already constructed Baltimore & Ohio Railroad complained in the 1850s that Irish workers not only mobilized for higher wages, but also to protect their job security and would not permit the company to replace them with other workers.²⁷

Although submitting to the arduous work day on the railroad, laborers did respond when faced with an unjust condition, usually with a refusal to work, or often an outbreak of violence. In April 1853, as the A&S was building from Springfield to Bloomington, there was a strike, workers demanding \$1.25 per day. When one gang



An outbreak of violence, Bill Yund illustration

refused to join the walk-out, a fight ensued. The *Springfield Daily Journal* reported that "Nobody was killed, though blood flowed freely and legs done their duty." Hauled before the local magistrate, the workers maintained their secrecy and their solidarity, refusing to answer questions. One worker was sentenced to jail on contempt charges for this refusal. The papers are quiet as to an outcome, whether or not the higher wages were won, or whether any workers were dismissed over the issue.²⁸

That winter there was an outbreak of violence on the Illinois Central in LaSalle on December 15, 1853, after a contractor, A.J. Story refused wage payment. He was attacked by a group of workers and murdered after he shot an Irish worker. Supposedly \$5,000 was taken from Story's safe and distributed amongst the waiting workers. Approximately 600-700 Irish workers filled the city's streets, until a local militia marched on them and dispersed them. Thirty-two workers were imprisoned the next day, followed by another 150 after the local police spent the night searching Irish shanties, with one man wounded when he refused arrest.²⁹

This resistance continued, even after the rail lines were completed. As the A&S line was completed to Chicago in 1859, workers again struck. This time the predominantly Irish surname workers were not track layers but were engineers, firemen and conductors. The company was in pre-

carious financial condition and the workers protested a wage cut and payment in low-value company script. In 1863 Bloomington workers were amongst the founders of the Brotherhood of the Footboard in Michigan, which became the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Irish immigrant son Patrick H. Morrissey of Bloomington would salvage the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen as their Grand Chairman, after the 1894 Pullman strike, rebuilding that organization and stabilizing its membership.

Conclusion

Immigrant workers, facing a strange land, brutal working conditions, and unhealthy living conditions, survived through their hard labor and their collective support of each other. The mass grave at Funks Grove Cemetery is a stark reminder of the harsh condition these workers faced. Although a difficult situation, these workers survived through systems of mutual support. Through this they developed their systems of resistance, learned survival tactics and laid the foundation for later generations which would profit from their experience and legacy to win full citizenship and rights in American society.

CIRCULAR.

At a meeting of the employees of the St. Louis, Alton & Chicago Railroad, held at Bloomington, on Thursday, August 18, 1859, JOHN C. RAGLAND was appointed Chairman, and JOHN SCANLAN, Secretary. The following preamble and resolutions were adopted:

WHEREAS, Gov. Matteson makes the following proposition, to-wit: That he will continue to pay for the present year as he has been paying, and to pay one month of back pay in the month of August, and continue to pay one month's back pay in the months of October and November; therefore, be it

Resolved, That we will sustain him in operating the road so long as said Matteson continues to act in good faith in bearing out the above mode of payments: *Provided*, That at any time the road shall not earn money enough to carry out the above, said Matteson is to immediately notify the employees, and ask their further action in reference to the matter—he making the payments as now proposed, up to the time of a call for a meeting of said employees. (The above is on condition that in future harmony is observed on the line of said road.) *Provided*, That any man who has been previously paid on any back month the company may be paying upon, he shall not be paid another back month until others are paid another month. If the arrangement is carried out by the Bondholders, that they have entered into with said Matteson, (to fulfill the January agreement,) at any time to take the road before this year closes, it is to do away with this agreement.

Resolved, That in the event of the necessity arising for Governor Matteson to notify the employees that the receipts are not sufficient to enable him to comply with the terms of the foregoing contract, then that the employees shall have the power to appoint of their number one man in fifty, who, when so appointed, shall convene at Bloomington and confer with Governor Matteson, and shall be empowered by him to examine his statements and accounts and report to the employees; and after consultation with them, and a full exhibit of the receipts and all other facts elicited by them, to adopt such further arrangements for payments as will, in their opinion, be for the best interests of all the employees.

Resolved, That in future any man or men who shall be discharged for a just cause, except in a case of *insubordination*, he shall be entitled to and receive all money due him forthwith; and that men discharged for insubordination shall be paid the same time and in the same proportion as the men who remain on the Road: *Provided*, however, that if any man shall be discharged who feels himself aggrieved, he shall have the privilege of appealing his case to the next officer superior to his

JOHN SCANLAN, *Secretary*.

foreman; and if his decision should not be satisfactory, then to the Superintendent of the Road, whose decision shall be final, and who shall have power, if he finds the case an unjust one, to order the full payment to the man discharged, or replace him at some other point than the one from which he was discharged.

Resolved, That the payments to be made shall be for the following months: Those who have not received their August payment, shall have it from the months of June, 1859, and November, 1858; that the September payment shall be for the month of July, 1859; that the October payment shall be for August, 1859, and October, 1858; that the November payment shall be for September, 1859, and September, 1858; that payment be made from the 1st to the 20th of current months; that months that back pay are paid on, be paid from the 20th to the 30th of said months.

JOEL A. MATTESON.

The following delegates were reported to be in attendance:

ALTON.

Patrick Hooley,	David Meagher,
James Mann,	Bernard O'Connor,
John Russell,	R. P. Tansey,
Davis Flinn,	Henry Larkin.
W. Heiskinson,	

SPRINGFIELD TO BLOOMINGTON.

John Quigley,	L. R. Kimball,
Richard Breed,	Daniel Carmody,
John O'Neill,	A. Flinn,
Henry Cooper,	John Bushell,
Patrick McCabe,	R. T. Williams,
John Tansen,	William Bushell,
Felix McManus,	J. Leahy,
James Burns,	Cornelius Burns,
George Judd,	T. Carmody,
T. R. Armstrong,	John Whelan,
D. S. Ives,	Mathew Cummings.
John C. Ragland,	

BLOOMINGTON TO JOLIET.

William Cotter,	John Lee,
James Cotton,	P. Sullivan,
Joseph Haines,	J. Murray,
W. Rowley,	J. Mooney,
James Smith,	Robert Park,
Robert Westwater,	Thomas Little,
William Condon,	J. W. Chappell,
P. Markey,	E. Dodwell,
J. F. Miller,	A. A. Brackett,
J. Quinn,	H. Osborne,
J. Swaringen,	William Shirland.
J. Holsworth,	

JOLIET TO CHICAGO.

Patrick Meehan,	Patrick Madden,
S. W. Arnold,	John Hogan,
Martin Meyers,	Thomas Keys.
Thomas Donahoe,	

JOHN C. RAGLAND, *Chairman*

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The Irish Workers At Funks Grove

by Stephen C. Funk

Over the years, people have asked about the unmarked grave of some fifty Irish railroad workers in Funks Grove Cemetery. There is very little information about it in print. The story I pass along came to me from my father's generation.

In the early 1850's, the Chicago and Alton Railroad was maybe over half finished. Starting in the north at Chicago, it passed through Bloomington, Shirley, Funks Grove, and McLean. Like a number of Illinois towns, Shirley and McLean are known as railroad towns as they sprang up alongside the railroad because of the commerce and transportation opportunities a railroad presented.

South of Funks Grove where the railroad was still under construction, Irish laborers developed a sickness that some deemed contagious. The people who lived there didn't want said workers buried in their neighborhood, for fear of the sickness. Those authorities behind the building of the

C & A looked here and there for burial ground, and found our people at Funks Grove would allow them to bury their dead in the cemetery here at the grove. Using horses and slip scrapers, a 12' by 75' grave was dug in the approximate center of what we call the old part of the Funks Grove Cemetery. The grave was never marked.

About ten years ago the cemetery association talked of erecting a marker before the location of the grave was forgotten. But there was disagreement, as there seemed to be no record in America or Ireland of the names of the dead railroad laborers. So the motion was tabled. The research is yet to be completed. However, with the help of the McLean County Historical Society and the generous donations of people, many of Irish descent, a beautiful marker was erected on the grave site in the spring of 2000.

Grandmothers Reminiscence on the Irish Railroad Workers

by L. Jane Canfield

I remember what my grandmother, Emily Jane Van Ness Wilcox, of the Wilcox Tile and Lumber Company, just a little south of Funks Grove, told me about the building of the Chicago and Mississippi railroad. It later became the Chicago and Alton Railroad.

She talked about how the young Irish men, some were fourteen and fifteen years old, who worked on the railroad in the early 1850's had migrated to the U.S. because of a famine in Ireland. They worked hard and lived in primitive

and crowded conditions along the building site of the railroad. In the summer of 1853, many men, both young and old, came down with cholera and a large number of them died in a matter of a few days. Fear of the spreading disease, they were buried in a mass grave west of the Funks Grove Church on the north side of the cemetery and the grave was unmarked.

Grandmother Wilcox always said there were 53 railroad men and three Indians buried at this site.

The Irish in McLean County

By Rev. John J. Burke
Pastor, St. Patrick's Parish, Bloomington

Bloomington Daily Pantagraph, May 5, 1900



Rev. John J. Burke (1857-1945)

It is estimated that twenty five per cent of the people of our country are of Irish birth or descent. If this proportion holds good in McLean County, Irish blood flows through the veins of about 20,000 of her citizens. Whether this is true or not, it is certain that the Irish form no inconsiderable portion of our population. It is not strange that they were peculiarly attracted to this magnificent county, the fertility of whose soil is surpassed only by their own Golden Vale or by the Valley of the Nile.

The Irish form an essential element, of the

brain and brawn, the bone and sinew, the intellect and energy of our people. It is true that, owing to the unjust laws of a tyrannical government, most of our Irish settlers were handicapped in various ways; but by industry, economy, honesty and sobriety many of them laid the foundation of competent fortunes, gave their children good educations and contributed their share toward our wonderful progress and prosperity.

Today, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Irish in McLean County are among the first in the professions, in business, in politics, and in agriculture. It is my purpose in this paper to give a brief sketch of the Irish in McLean County and of their good works for religion, charity and patriotism.

First was Andrew Biggs

Many Irish settled in other parts of Illinois long before they were attracted to McLean County. The armies of Gen. Anthony Wayne, an Irish American and of Gen. Clark contained many sons of Erin who afterward settled in various parts of the Prairie State, before the year 1800. The first Irishman who settled in McLean County was Andrew Biggs. He was born in the North of Ireland Oct. 22, 1772, emigrated to America in 1800, came from Ohio to what is now McLean County in 1826 and died in Funks Grove in 1840. He was a man of some education and was employed to teach some of the earlier schools of the County.

It is said that an early Irish settler of McLean County was a man whose name was Kelly. But little is known about him. He manifested the proclivities of the fighting race by engaging in the war against Black Hawk. He is said to have been killed in one of the battles of this war, sometime in 1832 and was buried some miles east of Bloomington.¹

The first school teacher in McLean County was a Miss Mullins, who was of Irish descent. In 1830 she was married to Lemuel Biggs, a stepson of Andrew Biggs.²

About the year 1836 Bernard O'Neil settled on a farm near the present location of Kappa. He lived on the farm until the time of the building of the Illinois Central Railroad through the place.

Sometime between 1836 and 1840 Wm. Clark bought land between Hudson and Kappa. Clark was from the North of Ireland. He was active energetic, hardworking citizen.

Early Irish in Bloomington

James and Cecilia O'Connor was the nurse of Mr. Geo. P. Davis who was born in 1842. Mr. Davis says: "My mother was very much attached to her and Mrs. O'Connor came every year or so to visit my mother, as long as my mother lived. Both Mr. and Mrs. O'Connor were good people and Mrs. O'Connor was especially bright". Mr. and Mrs. O'Connor did not live in Bloomington long. Soon after 1842 they moved to Springfield Ill., where Mrs. O'Connor died Feb. 5, 1887 in her 88th year and was buried from the Church of the Immaculate Conception. In 1846 Bartholomew Sheehan came to McLean Co. and lived for a while on a farm about 5 miles east of Bloomington.

Michael Winn came to Bloomington May 7, 1847. Between 1847 and 1850, Patrick Ryan, Wm. O'Brien and Thomas Holly settled here. Thomas Holly is still living on East Monroe St. He has reached the ripe old age of 89, and tells with much pleasure of the time when he and his brother-in-law Wm. O'Brien walked from Ottawa to Bloomington. This he says was in 1848.

The first Catholic child baptized in Bloomington was Julia O'Brien, the daughter of Wm. O'Brien. This was 1850. A priest (probably Father Montuori) came from Peoria, said Mass in Wm. O'Brien's house, and after the Mass, Baptized Julia O'Brien and one or two other children.

The county had very few Irish residents prior to 1850. At this time Bloomington had but 1600 inhabitants. In five years it increased to 5000.

The grading and building of the Illinois Central and the C.&A.R.R. through the county in 1852 brought almost all of the first permanent Irish settlers to Bloomington and McLean County. Among those who came that year, and some of whose families are still living here, were J. T. Maloney,

R. O'Connor, John O'Brien, Edward Moore, H. Fitzpatrick, P. Liston, John Ryan, B. McElvaney, P. Dwyre, L. Powers, P. Welsh and T. Gary.

Railroad Brought Many

John Lee, an Irishman, brought to Bloomington the first passenger train on the C.&A. He lived in Bloomington for about 30 years and died a few years ago at Omaha, Nebraska. He was considered one of the best engineers on the Alton.

The next influx of Irish to the county is due to the building of the C.&A.R.R. shops in Bloomington in 1853. In 1853 and the following years large numbers of Erin's sons settled in Bloomington. Among these may be mentioned the O'Neil Brothers, Luke Nevin. Phil Ryan, R. Long. P. Morrissey, J. Coleman, M. O'Neil, W. Condon, L. McQueeney, R. Kane, Z. Boler, and O. Moynihan.



Delilah Mullins-Evans, early Irish school mistress

Within ten years after the building of the Illinois Central and the C.&A.R.R.s the Irish population of Bloomington had increased to more than

1000 and it has been gradually increasing, every year since that time to the present.

Luke Nevin Old Time Merchant

For more than 50 years a familiar character on the streets is Luke Nevin. He was born in Roscommon, Co., Ireland. Few men have a larger fund of interesting stories of early Bloomington than he. Luke was a baggageman in New York and came here to take a position of foreman, on the Alton in the early fifties. Luke Nevin was the first Irishman to start in business in Bloomington

In 1860, a few months after Luke Nevin started his store on North Main St., William Condon, the veteran groceryman and well known ex-alderman of the 5th ward, opened a grocery store on W. Chestnut St. which he conducted for 40 years. While residing in Bloomington, Wm. Condon was always foremost in every religious and, patriotic movement. A short time ago he moved to Chicago where three of his sons are lawyers. One of his daughters is Kate Condon, the well known singer.

After working some years for the Alton, the O'Neil Brothers started the store which they are

still conducting on West Chestnut St. By industry, honesty and economy they have acquired a large amount of property and are among the honored and substantial citizens of McLean Co.

James McDougal, a brilliant Irish resident of the early 50s afterward became a United States Senator from the State of California.

For several years Philip Ryan conducted a hardware store on North Main St., retiring from business with a competence a few years ago. A settler of the early 50s in Towanda was M. Cox, father of Rev. T. E. Cox of Chicago.

Of the other early settlers, John Coleman was the father of Alderman P. W. Coleman the North Main St. undertaker and P. Morrissey was the father of J. J. Morrissey one of the leading lawyers of Central Illinois. Mrs. Margaret Gahagan has lived in the county more than 50 years, most of that time around LeRoy.

Wm. Mc Cambridge and J. F. O'Donnell, sons of early Irish settlers, are among the brilliant newspaper men Bloomington and McLean Co. are proud of. All of these early Irish settlers, with few exceptions were Catholics.

John O'Brien was one of the first Irishman, who bought a farm in the county. He was soon followed by P. Kinsella, J. Donahoe, J. Devine, J. Ryan, D. Spellman, R. Long, the Mernas and the Kellys. Some of these Irishmen own from 200 to 1000 acres of rich McLean Co. land. They began 50 years ago, or less, with nothing. Had they remained in Bloomington or some other city, they would be no better off in this world's goods than the average poor man.

They got possession of some land when it was cheap. By shrewdly adding to it, by hard work, and by the increase in land values, they are richer today than they ever dared to picture themselves in their fondest day dreams.

The Irish who remained in Bloomington have cozy little homes of their own, while a number of them have snug bank accounts laid aside for their old age.

Many of the Irish who came to this country fifty or more years ago followed canal digging or railroad grading. At a distance from home and church influence some of them may have become noisy, reckless and hilarious at times. Well meaning people were accustomed to point the finger of scorn at the Irish on account of their supposed drinking proclivities. But thank



O'Neil Family Brothers and Sisters c 1883

First row: William, Ellen McLean; 2nd row: Catherine Ryan, Daniel, Johanna Clancy, Mary Keating



James F. O'Donnell (1864-1926) publisher,
Bloomington Daily Bulletin

God! It can be said with truth that there is not so much intoxicating liquor used by our Irish citizens today as there is by their neighbors of other nationalities. As a people they are industrious, temperate, honest, homeloving, religious and patriotic.

Religion the Safeguard

Of the many influences that make for the betterment of a city, a county or a nation religion is the most important. Religion is the safeguard of a people.

The Irish people are deeply imbued with religion. They will, perhaps, do more, make greater sacrifices for religion than any other people.

If anyone doubts what the Irish of McLean County have done and will do for their religion let him take a glance at the magnificent buildings in the Holy Trinity block on North Main St. costing more than \$150,000; let him take a walk westward 12 blocks and viewing the four substantial brick structures in St. Patrick's parish worth

about \$75,000, see what the Irish in humbler circumstances have done since 1892; let him go to Chenoa and see the elegant brick church and palatial parsonage which a small number of people erected: and on which there is not one cent of debt; or let him see the beautiful Merna Church built in the midst of prairies and meadows with gilded cross pointing heavenward and bidding the farmers in their fields elevate their thoughts above the low and grovelling things of earth; let him examine the difficulties encountered and the obstacles overcome in accomplishing these great works and he cannot but admire the sterling character of a people who are willing to make such sacrifices for God and his truth.

The Early Priesthood

Father Bernard O'Hara was the first resident priest in Bloomington. In 1853 Bishop O'Regan of Chicago sent him to take charge of this portion of his flock. Although Mass had been said before in the house of W. O'Brien, the first Mass was said by the resident priest in the Old Court House, in December, 1853. Thirty three Catholics and one Protestant, Mary O'Hare, attended this Mass. The following Irish Catholics were present: M. Fitzpatrick, L. Nevin and two sisters, B. McElvaney, John Coleman and wife, T. Holly and wife, J. Dwyre and wife, T. O'Brien and wife, Peter Nevin and wife, John Kevin and wife, Ed. Moore and wife, R. O'Connor and wife, J. Maloney and wife, T. Maloney and wife, W. O'Neil, Mr. and Mrs. D. Spellman, P. Liston and wife, M. Winn and wife and P. Madden.

Shortly after Father O'Hara's advent the Catholics purchased the Old Methodist Church at the corner of Main and Olive streets. They paid \$1600 for it. The cemetery west of the city was also purchased during Father O'Hara's pastorate. Father O'Hara was pastor nearly three years and was succeeded by Father Cahill whose failing health compelled him to resign in a short time. He traveled in Europe for his health and died in Paris in 1857.

Fathers Fitzgibbons, Hurley and Sherry followed in rapid succession. The second of these, Father Hurley died a few years ago in Peoria where he had spent most of his life as pastor of St. Mary's and afterwards of St. Patrick's Church. In 1877 when Peoria diocese was formed by cutting off the southern portion of the diocese of Chicago, Father

Hurley was appointed first bishop of the new diocese. In his humility he asked to be relieved of the great responsibility, Rome listened to his request and appointed Bishop Spalding who made Father Hurley his vicar general.

Bought Holy Trinity Site

Father Kennedy was pastor from 1860 to 1865. To his wisdom and foresight is due the purchase of the fine block of ground bounded by Main, Center, Chestnut and Locust Sts. Owing to the large increase in the congregation he enlarged the Church and built a convent and parochial residence.

Father O'Gara was sent here in 1865 by Bishop Duggan, the successor of Bishop O'Regan. Father O'Gara immediately set to work to build a new Church which was destroyed by a windstorm in 1872. Such a calamity was discouraging and kept the congregation struggling for more than 30 years. Father O'Gara resigned and was succeeded by Father Douhig who remaining but a year, was followed by Dr. McGovern. During Dr. McGovern's pastorate the old Church building was sold and services were held for some time in Phoenix Hall.

The present Church at the corner of Chestnut and Main streets was started by Dr. McGovern, who had a temporary roof placed over the basement and held services there.

Father Costa was here for a short time after Dr. McGovern and Father McDermott came in 1874. When he took charge, the outlook was discouraging, nevertheless he continued the building of the new church. During Father McDermott's incumbency the Chicago diocese was divided and the present pastor Father Weldon was sent here in 1879 by Bishop Spalding, as Father McDermott's successor.



Rev. M. Weldon
(1847-1924)

A noticeable fact in connection with Father Weldon's pastorate is that it has extended over a longer space of time than that of all his predecessors. During the, nearly 27 years he has been at the head of Holy Trinity Church, that large structure has been completed and beautified, the convent has been enlarged, a parochial school and residence have been built, and all

the indebtedness has been liquidated.

On account of the large number of Irish people continually coming to the city, Holy Trinity congregation became so large that in 1892 it was deemed advisable to divide it.



St. Patrick's Church, c1893 built by parish founder, Rev. John J. Burke

St. Patrick's congregation was started in the western part of the city, (west of the C.&A.R.R.) and the members of both congregations work harmoniously for God and humanity. As an evidence of their zeal for religion, their love of country and their interest in education, besides contributing their share to the support of the public schools, they support two well-equipped parochial schools, thus saving the public thousands of dollars every year.

Charitable Societies

The Irish of McLean Co. have done much for charity in various ways. One of their concrete methods of doing charity is through the Ancient Order of Hibernians, whose fundamental principle is charity. The A.O.H. was organized in Bloomington, Sept. 23, 1872. It succeeded the Old Hibernian Society. As early as 1856 The Hibernian Rifles, an Irish military company of



Ancient Order of
the Hibernians
insignia

well drilled, well equipped men existed in Bloomington. In 1861, they returned their arms to the state and many of them enlisted to defend their country.

There are 130 members at present. Bloomington division is one of the pioneer divisions of the state, only 3 being organized before it in Litchfield, Murphysboro and E. St. Louis. The first President was James Costello and the first Recording-Secretary, M. Stack. Among the 17 charter members still living are Jas. Costello, John Mc Entee and P. Dixon.

The A.O.H is the only Catholic society in Bloomington furnishing sick benefits. Since its organization in 1873 about \$25,000 have been paid in sick and death benefits while about \$10,000 more have been given to Church and charitable work. The pastors of Holy Trinity and St. Patrick's churches can cheerfully testify to the generosity of the A.O.H.

Among the more recent of their charitable works may be mentioned the fact that the A. O. H. of Bloomington sent about. \$700 to the sufferers in E. St. Louis during the terrible destruction and suffering caused by the cyclone a few years ago. They directed the money to be distributed to all irrespective of creed or color.

In an educational way the Hibernians have been instrumental in bringing to Bloomington such lecturers and orators as W. J. Bryan, O'Neill Ryan, C. H. Harrison, Sr., C. S. Parnell and J. F. Finerty.³

One of its most important works is the encouragement it gives to the study of Irish History. The Bloomington Hibernians give four gold medals each year, (two to each of the parochial schools) for the best essays written by Irish history students on an Irish subject. This induces many to learn something of the land of their forefathers to which America owes so much.

The present officers of the A.O.H. are: President, P. W. Coleman; Division President, J. F. Heffernan; Vice President, Jos. Costello;

Recording Secretary J. Lynch; Financial Secretary, J. F. Brennan; Treasurer, Ed. Fahey. Bloomington Division of A O.H. has furnished the following state officers, J. F. Brennan, Secretary; J. Costello, Treasurer and Dan Tuohy, State Secretary.



Capt. John F. Heffernan
(1856-1921)

Irish in the Soldiery

Man's duty to his country is second only to his duty to God. Religion and patriotism go hand in hand. If the Irish are religious, they are no less patriotic. At the breaking out of the civil war McLean Co. did not get many Irish, still they furnished their quota of volunteers.

When Lincoln called for the first 75,000 men in 1861, seven companies enlisted from Bloomington and McLean Co. One of the seven companies was composed of Irishmen. Only one of the seven was received.⁴

In 1862, when President Lincoln called for 600,000 more men, McLean Co. furnished several companies. Among these Co. H, 94th Ill. Reg. was composed almost entirely of McLean Co. Irish.

Gen. W. W. Orme was colonel of this regiment and on account of the gallant fighting of himself and his men at their first battle, Prairie Grove, Ark., Dec. 7, 1862, was promoted to the office of Brigadier General. Owing to bad health, he resigned in 1864 and died in Bloomington, Sept. 13, 1866. He belonged to a stanch old Catholic family and was educated at Mt. St. Mary's Catholic College, Emmetsburg, Maryland

The Lieutenant Col. of this regiment was John Mc Nulta, who was made colonel when Gen. Orme was promoted. He afterwards attained the position of Brig. Gen.

Joseph Orme, a brother of Gen. Wm. Orme who was captain of the company was accidentally killed Dec. 31, 1862. His brother Charles Orme, then became captain. He died in 1864 and was succeeded by David Moore now living in Dakota. Only four of this company are now living in Bloomington. They are Michael Fitzpatrick, James Graham, Wm. Moran and Wm. Moore.

A company composed mostly of Irish went from McLean Co. in 1861 to join the 8th Missouri



James Costello (1848-1924)

Regiment. The 39th Ill. infantry contained a large number of Irish.

The McLean Company from the town of McLean was nearly all Irish. It was known as Co. A of the 117th Ill. Infantry.

John Mc Graw now living on W. Market St., belonged to Co. A, 1st Ill. Cavalry. Some McLean Co. Irish were numbered among the officers and men of this company.

Almost every company of all the regiments mustered in McLean Co. had a large sprinkling of Irish and many of the Illinois regiments had some McLean Co. Irishmen among their numbers.

The bodies of many of these brave Irishmen are on various southern battlefields. Some of them have never been found. The bodies of the following 42 McLean Co. Irish soldiers now rest in St. Mary's Cemetery, Bloomington, Ill.: James Halligan, John Kennedy, John McCherry, Henry Herrit, John O'Neil, John Lynch, John Daily, John Kelly, John Barry, Frank Cleary, Thomas Tegan, Richard O'Connor, Thomas Doyle, George Ostrom, Patrick Cotter, Robert Salton, Thomas H. Howard, Patrick O'Donnell, John O'Connell, Michael F. Fineran, Patrick Kiley, Michael Halissy, Michael Dillon, Patrick Keating, Abe Fields, Thomas Bogey, Thomas Wren, Michael Gilby, Jeff. Welsh, John Morgan, Patrick Ryan, Terrence Brady, James Boylan, John Halligan, John Kane, Patrick McQuinn, Patrick Purcell, Edward Kernan, J. Stone, John Donnelly, Christopher Carr and Edward Madden.

Patriotic to the Civil War

When we remember the small number of Irish in McLean Co. in 1861 compared with their numbers today, when we reflect that they were but an insignificant few in comparison with the whole population of the county, and when we consider the roll of their heroic dead as well as the unnamed scores of Irish in various Companies - then we can not but see that when our country's flag was fired upon the Irish of McLean Co. furnished more than their share of brave men to defend it. Each one of them said, in actions not in mere words:

"I love that starry banner,
For this to me it means

No Irish knee is made to bend
To haughty kings and queens.
Old Erin's sons and daughters, too,
Of freedom here may sing.
And every lass may be a queen
And every lad a king."

Deprived of liberty in the land of their birth the Irish in this country have ever been true to liberty, true to their adopted country and true to their God. If the true patriot is one who is a good citizen in time of peace and a brave soldier in time of war, then no one can deny that the Irish in America and especially the Irish in McLean County, are true patriots.

Only those who have attempted it, have any idea of the difficulty of obtaining facts concerning our Irish citizens prior to 1852. From this brief and imperfect sketch we can learn something of their work for religion, charity and patriotism.

Religion and education, charity and patriotism are necessary for true progress. Our citizens of Irish birth and blood have contributed their share towards the upbuilding of our county, because religion and education, charity and patriotism have always found true friends, zealous promoters and brave defenders in The Irish in McLean County.

1. No person by the name Kelley appears in the Adjutant General's Report for companies organized in McLean County
2. Delilah Mullins Evans's reminiscence about her sister Nancy Mullins-Biggs is published in *Transactions of the McLean County Historical Society, Vol. II*, 1904
3. William Jennings Bryan, Democratic Party candidate for U.S. President 1896, 1900 and 1908, Carter H. Harrison Sr., Mayor of Chicago 1879-1887; Charles Stuart Parnell Irish Land League organizer; J.F. Finerty, Publisher, *Chicago Citizen* 1880s and 1890s
4. Ezra Morton Prince wrote a brief account of this episode in "Companies that did not get into Service in 1861", Archives, McLean County Historical Society

The Labor of Irish Women in Nineteenth-Century Bloomington-Normal: A Portrait Painted Through the Writings of Sarah Davis and Helen Ross Hall

By Cynthia L. Baer

This paper examines the paid and unpaid labor of the Irish women who lived in the communities of Bloomington and Normal, Illinois, during the nineteenth century. In the paid labor force, the majority of single Irish women were working as domestic servants. In the unpaid labor force, married or widowed Irish women were working in their own homes taking care of the children, tending house, and managing the finances. After briefly listing the major primary and secondary sources consulted for this paper, a background on the conditions in Ireland that resulted in a mass emigration of men and women will be presented. Next, the labor Irish women performed as domestic servants in Bloomington-Normal will be analyzed. Specifically, the areas of benefits and duties will be examined. A brief look into other paid positions Irish women found in Bloomington-Normal will follow. Finally, an analysis of the unpaid labor Irish women performed as wives and mothers will be presented. Specific topics that will be discussed include the chores they were responsible for and their financial concerns. A colorful picture of the labor performed by these Irish women will emerge as the words of both Sarah Davis and Helen Ross Hall are used as illustrations.

Several primary sources are utilized in this paper. The first primary source is a manuscript entitled, "My Life - Helen Ross Hall." This manuscript was written by Marguerite Hall Conroy and is a compilation of the stories told to her by her mother, Helen Ross Hall. Mr. & Mrs Hall were born in protestant families. She and her husband, Samuel, emigrated from Ireland to New York in 1868. Sam Hall, an Orangeman, said of his Irish birth "If a cat has kittens in the oven does that make them biscuits!"¹ Then in 1869, they traveled westward and settled in Bloomington, Illinois. The manuscript is located in the archives of the McLean County Museum of History in Bloomington. Other primary sources are the let-

ters written by Sarah Davis, also a Bloomington resident, to her husband, David Davis, a justice on the United States Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. The Davises employed several female Irish domestic servants during their lifetime. Some of these women were Mary Whalen, Katie Walsh, and Bridget Kelly. In Davis' letters to her husband, she frequently comments on the lives of the servants. Davis was educated at the Hartford Female Seminary, the school of Catharine and Harriet Beecher. Catharine Beecher was a leader in the domestic science reform movement, and she promoted the proper training of housewives in the management and care of servants. As Davis attended the seminary, it is likely she was familiar with Beecher's theories. In addition, Davis' generous character makes the following illustrations an example of one of the better homes in which an Irish servant could have worked at in Bloomington-Normal.² Transcribed copies of the letters are available for review at The David Davis Mansion State Historic Site in Bloomington, Illinois. The original letters are located at the Illinois State Historical Library in Springfield.

The Federal United States Census records of 1860, 1870, and 1880, make up the last of the primary sources utilized for this paper. Microfilm copies of these records are located at all major university libraries and the Illinois State Library in Springfield. Various secondary sources are used in this paper as well. The most influential secondary source was Hasia R. Diner's *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century*. Other secondary works, such as Susan Strasser's *Never Done: A History of American Housework* and Alice Kessler-Harris' *Women Have Always Worked*, provide good background information on women's labor.

Before we can achieve any true understanding of the labor performed by Irish women in

Bloomington-Normal, we must know what their life was like in Ireland. There, a majority of women lived and worked in rural areas. Before the Great Famine of 1845 through 1849, Irish wives and daughters were a necessary component of the tenant farm. Not only did they perform all the traditional female tasks of housecleaning, food preparation, and child rearing, but they also raised livestock and worked in the fields. In addition, women contributed to the financial standing of the family through domestic industry. The pigs, poultry, and cloth they sold often pulled the family through during the hard times. The Famine altered the lives of the rural women to a great extent. One of the major effects was that only the eldest daughter would receive a dowry and only the eldest son would inherit the farm. Without that financial backing, the younger brothers and sisters could no longer afford to get married and start a family at an early age. As industry in Ireland was damaged by the Famine as well, there were few jobs available in the cities for them. As a result, many of these men and women emigrated to the United States in search of financial security. After the Famine, 52.9 percent of the emigrants from Ireland were women. Of the Irish women emigrants, most were young and single. From 1850 to 1887, over 66 percent of all emigrants were fifteen to thirty-five years of age. Furthermore, between 1887 and 1900, only 16 percent of all the Irish emigrating to the United States were married.³

Once the young men and women reached the United States, they primarily settled in the urban areas on the East coast. Eventually, with the development of canals and railroads, a portion of the Irish population drifted west into smaller communities such as Bloomington-Normal, Illinois. Bloomington, by virtue of its prime location between Chicago and St. Louis, was the home of a booming railroad industry. Both the Illinois Central and the Chicago and Alton railroads laid tracks through the town in 1853. Prior to 1850, the population of Bloomington was 1,000. However by 1870, this figure increased to 14,590. Of this number, 26.7 percent were immigrants.⁴

Due to their experiences in Ireland, the young, single Irish women who came to Bloomington-Normal were primarily concerned with achieving financial security. As a result, a large number of

these women took jobs as domestic servants. By examining the Federal United States Census records for the years 1860, 1870, and 1880, for Bloomington and Normal, the number of Irish-born women in domestic service can be tabulated. Table 1 shows the percentages of Irish women in four age categories who held domestic service jobs. In Bloomington, the Irish-born domestic servant population increased from 150 women in 1860 to 169 women in 1870. In 1880, however, the population dropped to 80, which was a 53 percent decrease. The ages of the majority of these women were between twenty and twenty-nine in all three census years. This supports the fact that the Irish women were mostly young at the time of emigration and were waiting till they were older and more financially stable to get married.⁵



Unidentified Irish family, Bloomington c1900

The expansion of the American middle class during the mid-nineteenth century increased the demand for domestic servants, yet there were few native-born women who were willing to take these jobs. Many of these women cited the stress, hard work, and menial tasks as reasons for their reluctance. Other unfavorable conditions noted were the long hours, inability to attend church services, living and working in close quarters, and the inability to receive friends. Pride was also an issue. During the nineteenth century, the term "help" took on a negative connotation, and female servants were often made to feel inferior

by being treated condescendingly by their employers.⁶

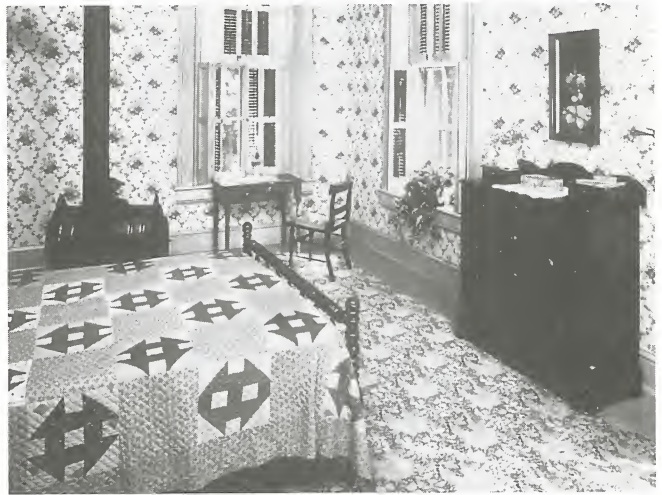
Table 1. Percentage of Irish Women in Domestic Service by Age

Year	Ages of Women				Total No. Women
	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-76	
1860	31.4%	53.3%	10.0%	5.3%	150
1870	24.9	53.2	12.4	9.5	169
1880	26.3	46.2	10.0	17.5	80

For Irish women, however, the live-in domestic service job was ideal as a temporary way to become financially stable before getting married. The predominance of Irish women in domestic service is illustrated in the records kept by New York's Society for the Encouragement of Faithful Domestic Servants. In 1825 the society received 2,164 applications from servants for job placement. Of these, 59 percent were Irish, 21 percent were black, 12 percent were native-born whites, and 8 percent were other white Europeans. By 1900, 60.5 percent of all Irish women wage-earners worked as domestic servants. Middle and upper class white families transferred the social stigma of the domestic servant job to those who did take the jobs, specifically the Irish. The social stigma against domestic service work took its greatest form in characterizing the Irish servant as "Bridget." Bridget, who "darted from one kitchen to another, usually shattering the crockery as she went," was characterized as being irresponsible, not very bright, and a horrible cook. Cartoons and editorials often showed the Irish Bridget as being the source of all wrongs in high society. However, for the Irish the benefits of shelter, food, clothing, and relatively high wages outweighed the negative aspects of the work and the ethnic slander.⁷

Due to the shortage of domestic servants, women who were willing to do the work had some leverage in setting the terms of their employment and the wages. In a letter on April 18, 1873, Sarah Davis illustrated how the shortage of servants allowed the domestics in Bloomington-Normal to expect certain benefits. She wrote that, "I shall not call for my new maid till Monday as Bridget says some don't like to begin on Saturday." Lucy Maynard Salmon, a late nineteenth-century authority on domestic service, stated that, "one of the striking conditions of the service, especially in view of the unwillingness of many persons to

enter it, is the fact that the wages received are relatively and sometimes absolutely higher than the average wages received in other wage-earning occupations open to women." Guidebooks for Irish immigrants emphasized that, "servant girls in America get from eighteen to sixteen dollars a month—sometimes they get as high as twenty." According to a daybook in the collections of the David Davis Mansion State Historic Site, Sarah Davis paid her servants from \$3 to \$4 per week. The money was usually paid on a monthly basis. One must also take into consideration the fact



Restored servants room, David Davis Mansion 1998 photo courtesy of David Davis Mansion State Historic Site, Illinois Historical Preservation Agency

that most domestics did not have to pay for housing, food, and clothing.⁸

The living arrangements for live-in servants were far better than other wage-earners, as they were away from "some of the dirtiest, most congested, most disease ridden sections of the city." One of the difficulties some servants did have to face was sharing small quarters with other servants. In the Davis household, however, the servants did not have to share a room. Each had their own spacious room with a built-in closet, sink, gas lighting, and a wood-burning stove. The servants' diets were also better, because they ate the same food as their employers. In addition to providing food and shelter, Sarah Davis also provided her servants with clothes. In a January 25, 1874, letter to David Davis she remarks that, "Ann McGirl's daughter had made some dresses for Bridget and Katie, and sewes [sic] very neatly."⁹



Kate Foley (left) and sister, c1874 Kate was a servant of Sarah Davis, photo courtesy of David Davis Mansion State Historic Site, Illinois Historical Preservation Agency

The most common position women in domestic service entered was that of general housemaid. These women performed all types of household work, except possibly laundry, which was sometimes sent to a special laundress. For example, tasks often included cleaning, cooking, serving, baking, taking care of children, shopping, and food preparation. Their day started at 5:30 or 6:00 every morning. The afternoons, after all of the everyday chores were completed, were devoted to special projects, such as polishing the silver. An example of a big project in the Davis household was the cleaning of ceilings and walls. In this case, the male hired hand and extra female help, who were hired for such projects, pitched in. This example can be found in a November 14, 1873, letter Sarah Davis wrote to her husband. "Ann has been with me two days, and is to come today to clean the walls of the back hall. I have had

Willie wash the ceiling to the kitchen—and the females washed the sides—It took them a whole day four of them—but they are much improved." Ann was later hired to make lard and soft soap, which took several days. On another occasion she was hired to help iron so that another servant could devote sufficient time and energy to cleaning the house.¹⁰

In the Davis household the relationship between the employer and employees was often close. Davis commented on numerous occasions that the servants were performing well. On March 2, 1872, she remarked that, "the girls are a great help in the care of the house." Davis was also aware of her servants' needs, especially if they were ill. On March 15, 1872, she stated, "Mary was not well yesterday—seemed to be taking cold—I gave her Boneset and Hop tea and she lay in bed yesterday but is bright today." Davis showed her generous nature by letting the servants sleep in one morning after hosting a dinner party and regularly allowed them to attend all church services. Davis was also willing to help the servants occasionally, such as during baking days. "Bridget and I have made two lovely sponge cakes which I have just taken from the pans." Davis also allowed her servants to have visitors in the house and gave them free time. In an undated letter of 1873, she wrote, "I have just been showing Thomas McGraw over the house—he having taken dinner with Bridget and this being the first time he has been to our new home." Most servants in general had at least one afternoon and one evening off per week. In the Davis household, the female servants took alternate Sundays off as well as several evenings.¹⁰ In cases of unusual problems in the private lives of the servants, Davis gave them the time off they requested. On April 18, 1872, she informed her husband that, "Mary was out when I came home yesterday—but came in with rosy cheeks quite excited, saying she had a letter—and must go to Chicago today . . . We have a small family today without Mary." On another occasion she wrote that,

this has been a day of interruptions—Bridget left us about eleven o'clock to be absent till Monday . . . Bridget (kind soul) churned before she left today—fearing Katie might not know how to manage the butter—and has left us provided with

sundry articles of food—and at last regretted she had to leave me when I had Ann and Miss Lake in addition to our own family. Katie is quite orderly and will do the best she knows how in the way of cooking.¹²

Relations between the servants were also very important, especially since they often worked in close proximity. Sarah Davis wrote to husband on February 15, 1872, remarking on their servants' relations. "Ann and Willie agree nicely. Mary goes on as usual. Both girls are piecing quilts but whether it betokens anything I doubt." However, relations were not always good between the servants. On December 5, 1872, Davis commented that, "Mary seems to have hard work to find a place. Bridget says she thinks her character has gone abroad—and people are afraid of her. She is very crabbed sometimes to Bridget and I shall not take her back to live with us after we break up."¹³ On the whole, the picture painted by Sarah Davis of the labor performed by the Irish female servants is positive. However, given Sarah Davis' generous nature, it is very likely that Irish female servants employed in other Bloomington-Normal households did not fare as well.

Irish women also took other types of wage jobs in Bloomington-Normal. In the 1860 Census, five women were listed as having more specialized occupations. Their ages ranged from thirty to

seventy years of age, with three of the five in their early thirties. The jobs they held included milliner, hotel keeper, laundress, and seamstress. In contrast, the 1870 Census listed twenty-one women with specialized occupations. There were seven dressmakers, eight wash women or laundresses, two nurses, a tailoress, and a superioress. Their ages ranged from twenty to fifty-seven, with the majority in the thirty to fifty-seven years of age group. In 1880 the number of Irish women in specialized areas totaled to twenty. There were three teachers, two nurses, two boarding house keepers, six dressmakers or seamstresses, four laundresses, two clerks, and one woman in millinery. Their ages ranged from twenty to sixty-five, the majority of which were in the thirty to forty-nine years of age category. It was not uncommon for women with these specialized jobs to be widows, abandoned wives with children, or in families that were facing hard times.¹⁴

By again examining the Federal United States Census records for the years 1860, 1870, and 1880, for Bloomington and Normal, the number of married or widowed Irish-born women who worked in the home can be tabulated. Tables 2, 3, and 4 show the percentages of these women with children at home. The married or widowed Irish female population in Bloomington-Normal increased between 1860 and 1870, the totals being 367 and 652 respectively. However, by

Table 2. Percentage of Irish Women with Children at Home in 1860 Census.

Age of Women	Number of Children at Home									
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
39 & Younger	13.23%	28.39%	25.16%	18.06%	10.32%	2.90%	1.29%	0.32%	0.00%	0.00%
40 & Older	14.04	24.56	17.54	21.05	12.28	7.02	1.75	1.75	0.00	0.00

Table 3. Percentage of Irish Women with Children at Home in 1870 Census.

Age of Women	Number of Children at Home									
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
39 & Younger	12.20%	18.42%	19.14%	14.83%	15.31%	12.68%	4.07%	2.63%	0.72%	0.00%
40 & Older	16.24	19.23	11.11	14.96	12.82	11.54	7.26	3.85	0.85	2.14

Table 4. Percentage of Irish Women with Children at Home in 1880 Census.

Age of Women	Number of Children at Home									
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
39 & Younger	11.20%	12.20%	11.70%	15.60%	18.00%	12.20%	10.20%	4.90%	2.00%	1.50%
40 & Older	20.80	13.40	12.00	14.20	12.50	9.50	8.60	4.60	3.20	1.00

1880, the population decreased to 614. This indicates that during the 1870s the migration of Irish-born women into the community was starting to decline. Reasons behind this decline could be migration to other areas or death. A shift in the age of the female population can also be seen between the years 1860, 1870, and 1880. The majority of the female population was under the age of thirty-nine in 1860, yet by 1880 the majority of the population was over forty.¹⁵



Helen Ross Hall (1846-1928)
Photo, courtesy of Jean McCrossin

While some married or widowed Irish women maintained outside employment, the majority of them worked only within their home. Helen Ross Hall's memories of her years as a wife and mother provide a lively and compelling portrait of the unpaid labor Irish women performed in the home. A major part of the wife's duties in the home were the preparation of foods, starting with gardening and ending with cooking. During the summer months, women's regular chores were added to with seasonal tasks such as canning and preserving. Helen Ross Hall's memoir provides an excellent example of this unpaid labor.

"In Bloomington's early days the baking was done in each housewife's kitchen and vegetables and fruit canned in your own home or fresh ones stored in the cellar. I tried hard and with the long days to practice succeeded in becoming a fairly good cook, turning out tasty dishes quickly and confidently."¹⁶

Not only did Hall have a garden, she also raised animals.

Our cows gave lots of milk and were able to sell quarts and quarts every day to our neighbors. The garden was still our greatest asset and grapes and fruit trees helped fill the jars for winter use. Chickens were a must in those days and with lots of milk, eggs and canned fruits and vegetables, we ate well.¹⁷

Another tedious chore was the sewing of clothes and knitting of socks and mittens for her husband and children. Hall stated that the, "endless struggle to keep the family fed, clean and healthy seemed too much." Some of this unpaid labor was done in the companionship of the neighborhood women, which made the work load more bearable. They would often give each other advice, assist in child rearing, and help with canning and baking.¹⁸

Native-born Americans viewed the Irish as "reckless breeders," because of their large number of children. The care of the children is another major part of the unpaid labor Irish women performed. Helen Ross Hall is an extreme example in that she gave birth to fourteen children over a twenty-five year period from 1870 to 1895. She commented that for her first pregnancy, "Aunt Celia explained to me that the sickness I was experiencing every morning meant the coming of a child, months away but very definitely coming." Hall referred to her later pregnancies in an off-hand manner,

Children came regularly—Sarah, Carrie, Mary, Arthur—and with seven to feed and clothe and house we added onto our home . . . By the time Cora arrived I was feeling better and as Helen, John, Eva and Charlotte joined our family I became philosophical and just made the best of everything."¹⁹

Needless to say, when Hall's last two children were born in 1891 and 1895, when she was 45 and 49 years of age, it gave her quite a shock. Hall felt she was "by all the standards too old for child bearing...As Sam said, by this time children were coming out of the windows and chimney of our small home."²⁰

Financial worries were never far from married or widowed Irish women's minds, due to their experiences in Ireland and the instability of their husband's jobs. Helen Ross Hall's husband, Sam, worked in the Chicago and Alton railroad shops. However, he was laid off several times and it was not until 1888 that he was able to find steadier work on the Bloomington Police Force. Hall told her daughter that,

We had payments coming in from our old home but somehow expenses seemed to take every cent and always interest time came and had to be paid out of August pay and with school books and clothes in



Sam and Helen Ross Hall House, c1890 411 E. Emerson, Bloomington

Mrs. Hall in center with baby and her children. Photo, courtesy of Jean McCrossin

September we were always in a tight spot as coal for winter became a must. As might be expected with such a large family savings was next to impossible.²¹

Hall's deep concern over finances echoes the experiences of the majority of married Irish women. Hall, however, was fortunate in that she was not also faced with the problems of family discord due to abandonment or widowhood. These two phenomena were prevalent in the Irish communities, due to the strain of adjusting to a new life and the dangers of manual labor. For example, statistics compiled on the Irish in Philadelphia in 1870 show that the Irish had the next largest percentage of female-headed households behind African-Americans.²²

As the picture of the labor of Irish women in Bloomington-Normal during the nineteenth century emerges, we see a dynamic group of women who faced death and starvation in their homeland. When they came to America, and specifically to Bloomington-Normal, Illinois, a large number took domestic service jobs in order to ensure future financial security. As servants, they were

provided with relatively high wages, shelter, food, and clothing. This situation was ideal for the young and single immigrants, despite the hard work, long hours, and ethnic slander they endured. In the fortunate case of the Davis family servants, they were often treated like family by their employers. Once the Irish women married, they worked long days caring for the home and family and managing the finances. As families were often large, the unpaid labor that was put into these tasks was monumental. Helen Ross Hall's memories of her life as a wife and mother emphasizes this point. All of these Irish women were true survivors, and it was their survival skills that they passed on to their daughters. The generation born to these Irish women across the United States would become one of the most active and freethinking generations of women activists. Some of these activists include Margaret Sanger, one of the main founders of the birth control movement, and Mary Kenny O'Sullivan, one of the organizers of the Women's Trade Union League.²³ Without these women, and the survival skills instilled by their Irish mothers, our history would not have been the same.

1. Personal communication, Jean McCrossin, March 7, 2000. Mrs McCrossin remembers that Sam and Helen Ross Hall did not view themselves as Irish. Mr. Hall called himself "an Orangeman" and Mrs. Hall identified herself as English. It was important to them not to be identified as Irish.
2. Mae Elizabeth Harveson, Catharine Esther Beecher: Pioneer Educator (Lancaster, Pa.: The Science Press Printing Co., 1932; reprint, New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969), 37-38.
3. Gearoid O. Tuathaigh, "The Role of Women in Ireland under the new English Order," in *Women In Irish Society: The Historical Dimension*, ed. Margaret MacCurtain and Donncha O Corrain (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), 28-29; Mary Cullen, "Breadwinners and Providers: Women in the Household Economy of Labouring Families 1835-6," in *Women Surviving: Studies in Irish Women's History in the 19th & 20th centuries*, ed. Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy (Dublin, Ireland: Poolbeg Press Ltd., 1989), 85,98-99; Laurence J. McCaffrey, *Textures of Irish America* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 13; Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters In America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 31-33.
4. Laurence J. McCaffrey, "The Irish-American Dimension," in *The Irish in Chicago*, ed. Laurence J. McCaffrey, Ellen Skerrett, Michael F. Funchion, and Charles Fanning (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 7,8; Dennis Clark, *Hibernia America: The Irish and Regional Cultures* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), 15,25,125-126; *History of McLean County, Illinois* (Chicago: William Le Baron, Jr. & Co., 1879), 299,315,346-347,444.
5. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1965, microfilm), n.p.; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1965, microfilm), n.p.; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1965, microfilm), n.p.
6. Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 164,169; David Katzman, *Seven Days A Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 120-121; Alice Kessler-Harris, *Women Have Always Worked* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1981), 82; Daniel E. Sutherland, *Americans & Their Servants* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 125-126.
7. Strasser, *Never Done*, 164-165; Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, xiii,72,80,89; Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 24; Sutherland, *Americans*, 67.
8. Josephine Clara Goldmark, *Pilgrims of '48* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 232; quoted in Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 85; Sarah Davis to David Davis, 18 April 1873, Davis Family Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Illinois; Lucy M. Salmon, "A Statistical Inquiry Concerning Domestic Service," *Quarterly Publications of the American Statistical Association* 3 (1892): 89-118; quoted in Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 83; Rev. Stephen Byrne, *Irish Emigration to the United States: What It Has Been and What It Is* (New York: Catholic Publications, 1874); quoted in Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 89; Daybook, David Davis Mansion Historic Site, Bloomington, Illinois.
9. Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home* (New York: J. B. Ford & Co., 1869; reprint, New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1971), 329; Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 90; Sarah Davis to David Davis, 25 January 1874, Davis Family Papers.
10. Daniel E. Sutherland, *Americans*, 94; Sarah Davis to David Davis, 14 November 1873, 15 April 1874, 20 October 1874, Davis Family Papers.
11. *Ibid.*, 2, 15 March 1872, 1 November 1874, 15 April 1874, n.d. 1873, 24 November 1872, 6 November 1873, Davis Family Papers.

12. Ibid., 18 April 1872, 24 April 1874, Davis Family Papers.
3. Ibid., 15 February 1872, 5 December 1872, Davis Family Papers.
14. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, n.p.; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, n.p.; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States, n.p.; Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 96.
15. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, n.p. The parts of the 1860 Census that were examined are Normal Township, Bloomington Ward 1, Bloomington Ward 2, Bloomington Ward 3, Bloomington Ward 4, and Bloomington Township. The age thirty-nine and younger row is based on a total of 310 women out of a total of 367 (84.47 percent). The age forty and older row is based on a total of 57 women out of a total of 367 (15.53 percent); U.S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, n.p. The parts of the 1870 Census that were examined are Normal Township, City of Bloomington, and Bloomington Township. The age of thirty-nine and younger row is based on a total of 418 women out of a total of 652 (64.11 percent). The age forty and older row is based on a total of 234 women out of a total of 652 (35.89 percent); U.S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States, n.p. The parts of the 1880 Census that were examined are City of Bloomington Wards 1 through 6, Bloomington Township, and Normal Corporation. The age thirty-nine and younger row is based on a total of 205 women out of 614 (33.4 percent). The age forty and older row is based on a total of 409 women out of 614 (66.6 percent). There was one Irish woman under the age of 39 with 10 children listed at home (.5 percent), and one Irish woman over the age of 40 with 10 children listed at home (.2 percent).
16. Marguerite Conroy, comp., "My Life-Helen Ross Hall," TMs, McLean County Historical Society, Bloomington, Illinois, n.p.
17. Conroy, "Helen Ross Hall," n.p.
18. Ibid., n.p.
19. Ibid., n.p.
20. Ibid., n.p.
21. Ibid., n.p.
22. Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 54-55, 61.
23. Ibid., 62-63; Clark, *Hibernia America*, 126; McCaffrey, *Textures*, 7-8.

Irish-American Organizations in Bloomington in the 1880s

by Mark T. Dunn

O Paddy dear, and did ye hear the news that's goin' round?
The shamrock is by law forbid to grow on Irish ground!
No more Saint Patrick's Day we'll keep, his colour can't be seen,
For there's a cruel law ag'in the Wearin o' the Green.

I met with Napper Tandy, and he took me by the hand,
And he said, "How's poor ould Ireland, and how does she stand?"
"She's the most distressful country that ever yet was seen,
For they're hanging men and women there for the
Wearin' o' the Green."

So if the colour we must wear be England's cruel red,
Let it remind us of the blood that Irishmen have shed;
And pull the shamrock from your hat, and throw it on the sod,
But never fear, 'twill take root there, though underfoot 'tis trod.

When laws can stop the blades of grass from growin' as they grow,
And when the leaves in summer-time their colour dare not show,
Then I will change the colour too I wear in my caubeen;
But till that day, please God, I'll stick to the Wearin' o' the Green

Anonymous (18th century)

When my father was a boy, his family would celebrate the major holidays with his grandparents at their home on East Market Street. His grandfather, Richard Thomas Dunn, was the first member of the Dunn family born in the United States. Richard's older brother, John Michael Dunn, was born in Ireland in late 1857 near Johnstown Castle, a few miles west of the city of Wexford in the southeastern area of Ireland. Three generations of the Dunn family left Ireland shortly after John Michael's birth, settled in New York state for awhile, and in April 1865 arrived in Bloomington.

My father remembers his grandmother and his aunt Catherine singing "The Wearing of the Green" in the kitchen as they prepared Thanksgiving and Christmas suppers for the rest of the family. One thing was certain for Irish immigrants living in Bloomington in the 1880's: Wearing the green was not by law forbidden here. Thousands of Irish immigrants and their descendants who sank their roots in this community carried the interests of their homeland with them virtually every day of their lives - not just on the holidays.

The circumstances were eloquently summarized

by a writer for the *Daily Pantagraph* who wrote about Bloomington's celebration of St Patrick's Day in 1886:

What Irishman awakes and sniffs the balmy breezes of his home in Illinois, and fills his lungs with the pure air of the prairies and the ozone of freedom, but looks back with love to the land of the shamrock, the primrose, the yellow-blossoming 'whin' and the daisy? The greater Ireland of America has not forgotten the emerald that sparkles on the bosom of the wild Atlantic. The greater Ireland of today - perhaps the greatest element of the fifty millions of our people love the United States so much and the old Ireland so much that they with all their hearts wish that Ireland were a state of our union. St. Patrick's day and the Fourth of July divide equally the honors with the Irish-American.¹

This dual allegiance of our Irish-Americans was a source of strength among the Irish community and simultaneously an occasion for distrust and opposition for many others who had settled this community before the Irish began to arrive in force in the 1850's.

The Bloomington Irish were a clannish group in the 1880's and frequently came together in politics, religion, and business in ways that were threatening to others outside the Irish network. They socialized through an intricate web of clubs and organizations. By the 1890's they nearly dominated Bloomington's ward politics.

Three examples of the close associations among our Bloomington Irish ancestors are found in the Irish-American Blaine and Logan Club, organized in October 1884 to support the Republican candidacy of James G. Blaine for President of the United States, The Parnell Division of the Irish-American Land League, founded in 1885 to lend financial support to the Irish Land League, and the Holy Trinity Church fairs, held annually throughout the 1880's. If you have Irish ancestors who lived in Bloomington in the 1880's, it is almost certain that a member of your family was actively involved in or financially supported these organizations and their activities.

The Bloomington Irish-American Blaine and Logan Club in 1884

Some historic context is necessary to understand the function of the Irish-American Blaine and Logan Club. Many historians place the end of Reconstruction after the Civil War around 1877. The thirty-seven years between the end of Reconstruction and the beginning of the First World War are often described as a period of transition for this country from a rural, agrarian economy to an urban, industrial economy. In the 1880's, most of the national leaders contending for our highest offices had been young men during the Civil War and had forged their beliefs and ideals during that period. James Gillespie Blaine (1830-1893) was one such statesman.

Blaine was born in West Brownsville, Pennsylvania. He was an well-educated man, who had studied at Washington College, taught at the Pennsylvania Institute for the Blind, and read law before moving to Augusta, Maine and becoming an influential newspaper man. Blaine served in Congress from 1863 until 1876 and served as its Speaker from 1869-1875. In 1876, he had been touted as a possible Presidential candidate, but he was the victim of a smear campaign and instead served in the Senate from 1876-1881.

Blaine was ahead of his time in many of the policies he favored. He was an early proponent of improved relationships with Latin American countries, particularly in the area of trade. He was also a strong supporter of religious liberty and tolerance. In a late 1884 address, Blaine contended that in no time in his memory had there been so little bigotry in this country; and he praised the "cordial and hearty co-operation . . . among religious denominations — Protestant, Catholic, and Hebrew."² Unfortunately, his assessment of the state of religious tolerance in the United States was inaccurate.

Despite his optimistic assessments, in 1884 Blaine campaigned as a Presidential candidate under the clouds of ethnic and religious intolerance. He had been a strong supporter of independence for Ireland during his terms in the House and Senate.³ That support of Ireland earned him the enmity of many Americans of English descent and of Irish Orangemen. Blaine's mother was of Irish ancestry, and her family had been Catholic although Blaine himself was Presbyterian. In addition, his daughter mar-

ried a Catholic and converted to her husband's faith. In many respects, in the 1880's the identification of an American as a Catholic carried with it a high probability that there was an Irish heritage lurking in the background.

Opposition to Blaine focused both on his Irish sympathies and Catholic affiliations. In Philadelphia and Pittsburgh in June of 1884, members of the American Grand Lodge of Orangemen and members of other anti-Catholic societies declared publicly that they would not vote for Blaine if Grover Cleveland were the Democratic presidential candidate. These organizations were predominately Republican in membership, but a leader of the Pittsburgh meeting declared "[w]e have three thousand men in this county, and of that number I can pick out only three Democrats. The others have never thought of voting anything but the Republican ticket, but we cannot do it this year."⁴ When asked why his organization opposed Blaine when it was understood that Blaine himself was not a Catholic, the Pittsburgh Orangeman responded: "[b]ecause his affiliations are in the direction of Catholicism, and in favor of the principles we oppose. His ardent leanings toward the nationalists [in Ireland] kill him effectually in my estimation and in the opinion of all good Orangemen."⁵

Patently bigoted sentiments such as those expressed above were also common in McLean County and Bloomington. A few examples should suffice out of the many available candidates. In August 1884, the *Daily Pantagraph* carried a story with the headline: "No Irish Need Apply - And No Catholic Ladies Wanted in the Qui Vive Club." The article reported that the young Democratic ladies of El Paso, Illinois had formed a new club; however, they prohibited membership by anyone of Irish heritage or of the Catholic denomination.⁶ In 1884-1885, J. G. White, a hate monger and preacher, toured central Illinois denouncing the Catholic Church and creating a riot at one of his Lincoln, Illinois speeches.⁷ In the early 1890's Bloomington was the site of the state convention of the American Protective Association, a neo-Know-Nothing, nativist, anti-Catholic organization which was said to have multiple chapters in Bloomington and Normal, as well as a women's auxiliary. Hundreds of Illinois A.P.A. members were quartered in the private homes of prominent Bloomington families during the week of the

association's meeting here.

The reaction to anti-Blaine sentiment was strong among Bloomington Irishmen. They were not about to take criticism of Blaine without a strong response. The *Daily Pantagraph* sent a reporter to Bloomington's west side to interview several citizens who had read the statement of the Orangemen that they would oppose Blaine "because his mother was a Catholic and his daughter, a Catholic, had married a Catholic, a distinguished colonel in the regular army."⁸ The west side of Bloomington was thought of as the Irish, Catholic, Democratic stronghold in this city. A person identified as a "prominent gentleman" who was always identified with the Democratic party told the reporter:

Isn't that delightful talk in the land of free speech and free religion. The tools and hirelings of England; the traitorous sons of Ireland, the enemies of Irish freedom, presume to dictate to the citizens of the United States. I tell you, sir, the more of that kind of talk the better for Blaine. The Irish Catholics of America have never stopped to ask what a man's religion is. They vote their political convictions, and don't care a snap for his religious creed. We never had a chance to vote for a Catholic president in our lives, and don't ask for one until the American people nominate one, but we don't propose to see a noble patriot, a pure statesman, and a man of marked genius black-balled because there is Catholic blood in his veins. We know that Blaine's mother was a Catholic, one of the great Ewing family of Ohio, of whom also Mrs. Gen. Sherman is one, and we know that Blaine is a Presbyterian. What's all that got to do with his ability and patriotism as a president? Our surroundings in America are all Protestant, one might say, and we are contented. The great mass of Protestants treat us as fairly, honorably and neighborly as our Catholic acquaintances. But, I tell you, my friend, it makes an Irish-Catholic's blood hot, after being persecuted out of Ireland by Orangemen, to see them attempt to brand with dishonor a noble cause and distinguished man.

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because the mother that bore him chances to be a Catholic.⁹

The reaction of a west side Bloomington, Irish Democrat was generally shared by the American Irish Press, such as the *Irish World*, and the *Citizen*, which came out strongly in favor of Blaine and in opposition to Grover Cleveland.¹⁰

On October 15, 1884, the *Daily Pantagraph* reported that the "Noble Irishmen" of Bloomington had met the prior evening to form the Irish-American Blaine and Logan Club.¹¹ Mr. Luke Nevin, a North Main Street grocer, called the meeting to order. P. Kealy was chosen chairman and Daniel Leary was elected secretary. John Gregory was elected vice-president and Dennis Fogerty treasurer. A committee consisting of Messers John Sullivan, Dan Leary, Mr. O'Donnel, Dennis Fogerty and John Gregory was appointed to draft the organization's constitution and bylaws.¹² Speakers included Captain Hickey, Patrick Dixon, Luke Nevin and John Sullivan. Dixon praised the Irish-American press for favoring Blaine's candidacy. Nevin was reported to have said that he "used to be a Democrat;" however, since he had become a Republican, he had been often insulted by his Democratic friends. He thanked God that now that Blaine was a candidate, he was not alone in his support of the Republican party. Sullivan was reported to have said that "you can scratch the back of any moss back and you would generally find the seeds of know-nothingism creeping out."¹³

The Irish-American Blaine and Logan club organized itself along ward boundaries to get out the vote for the Republican ticket.¹⁴ The Ward committees were as follows:

First Ward - Patrick Kealy, George Holly and P. Kennedy.

Second Ward - John Mulheran, Luke Nevin and Denis O'Neil.

Third Ward - John Kane, Thomas Graham and J. Graham.

Fourth Ward - Dennis Fogerty, Michael Leary and Michael Ryan.

Fifth Ward - Duke Aker, Ed Cooney and Michael Meagher.



Richard Thomas Dunn (1862-1948)

Sixth Ward - Richard Dunn, James Maloney and John Sullivan.

Not all Irishmen in the city agreed with the goal of the Irish-American Blaine and Logan Club. William Condon, Sr., a long time Democratic alderman, and John Sullivan, a member of the new Blaine and Logan club, engaged in a heated exchange of letters in the *Daily Bulletin* and the *Daily Pantagraph*.¹⁵ Sullivan responded to Condon's criticism of the club by writing to Condon: "Shame, shame on you for allowing yourself to become the tool of demagogues." Sullivan concluded: "What do the Irish owe the Democratic party. If Mr. Condon's memory serves him, and I think it should, does he remember the Irishman who was promised the nomination for mayor on the Democratic ticket in 1883, and does not Mr. Condon know why he was not nominated?"¹⁶ Condon, of course, had been the Democrat who had been promised the opportunity to run for mayor in 1883, but was later a disappointed candidate. Condon responded to Sullivan's letter by forming a west side Irish Democrats club and devoted most to the first meeting of that club responding to Sullivan's letter.¹⁷

Both Blaine and Logan visited Bloomington

toward the end of their campaigns. Blaine's travel plans were highly publicized, and a great rally was planned in anticipation of his arrival. Blaine's special train was to stop at the Union depot; and he was to be escorted to the east side of the courthouse square, where a speaker's platform was erected to permit Blaine to address the public. The *Daily Pantagraph* reported that some 25,000 people lined the streets to catch a glimpse of Blaine. However, Blaine's visit ended a fiasco when his train failed to stop at the Union depot, leaving the welcoming committee gaping on the platform. The train finally did stop at the Chestnut Street crossing (in the heart of the Democratic Fifth Ward), but Blaine did not leave the train to the disappointment of all the assembled.¹⁸ Condon and many other Fifth Ward Irish Democrats probably hoisted a beer that evening in merriment over the giant Republican disaster.

The October Republican disappointment was followed by Blaine's defeat in the November 1884 election. While we now know the successful presidential candidate long before the polls close on election day, the Blaine/Cleveland contest was not decided until November 17, 1884; and each day for two weeks the newspaper carried headlines suggesting alternately Blaine's loss or his anticipated victory. This long delay was the result of the close contest in New York, where Grover Cleveland was Governor. Ultimately Cleveland carried New York by 1,076 votes, with considerable cross-over voting between the Republican and Democratic parties.¹⁹ Blaine's loss was attributed to an Independent Republican movement in New York City, which supported Grover Cleveland, and a last minute declaration by a supposed Blaine supporter and minister, who characterized the Democratic party as the party of "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion." This anti-Catholic sentiment - aimed particularly at the drinking habits of the Irish - was said to have dissuaded Irish-American Democrats from crossing over and voting for Blaine.²⁰ The work of the Irish-American Blaine and Logan Club was not wasted in our community, where their part of the ticket carried the city with a resounding majority.

Bloomington's Parnell Division of the Irish-American Land League in 1885-86

Many of the members of the Irish-American Blaine and Logan Club came together again in

1885 to form the Parnell division of the Irish-American Land League. Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891) was an Irish nationalist and a leader of the Irish Land League, which had been founded in 1879 to press the British parliament for changes in its laws relating to the ownership of land and tenants' property rights. Parnell was an Irish representative in the British House of Commons, and his general scheme was to interfere with the activities of the House of Commons by constantly interrupting its proceedings to discuss the various injustices practiced upon the Irish people by the British government. By mid-1885 Parnell was speaking out in favor of establishing a separate Irish parliament for Ireland. The Irish-American Land League was established as a counterpart to the Irish Land League, with the primary purpose of raising funds to support members of the Irish Land League in Parliament.²¹

The depth of English oppression of Irish landowners and tenants is hard for us to imagine today. For example, in 1703, after the Treaty of Limerick, the English Parliament had passed an Act which had the following provisions:

- (1) The fee-simple estate of a Catholic, whether acquired by purchase or inheritance, should, on the conformity of the eldest son to the State religion, be at once converted into an estate for life only, the father being prohibited from selling, mortgaging, or otherwise disposing of, or dealing with it, and the Protestant son succeeding, on the death of the father, to the property;
- (2) If the heir-at-law of a Catholic continued to profess the religion of his father, the estate was divided, share and share alike, among the sons. If there were no sons it was divided among the daughters, and in failure of daughters, among the collateral kindred of the father;
- (3) Catholic fathers were debarred from becoming guardians to their own children, if the latter had, at any age, become Protestant Episcopalians;
- (4) Protestants were forbidden to marry Catholics having an estate in Ireland, or in

any part of the three kingdoms;

(5) Papists were rendered incapable of purchasing lands of inheritance, but were allowed to take leases of thirty-one years, provided that if their farms produced more than one-third of the rental, then the tenancy was to cease, and the holding to be transferred to the first Protestant who might "discover" the rate of profit.²²

The decade in Ireland after the great famine was a period of evictions of Irish tenants by their British landlords. Between 1849 and 1856, 259,382 Irishmen had been evicted from their lands. Therefore, about one of every five Irishman who came to America in that period had been a victim of eviction.²³ Many of these evictions were based on religious bigotry such as: (1) one Colonel Lewis who ejected a tenant in the County of Monaghan for not sending his children to a Protestant school; (2) the Protestant Bishop Plunket of Tuam, who evicted 250 Irish men, women and children for the same reasons; and (3) a landlord named Jones who evicted a tenant in County Cork for voting contrary to the landlord's wishes.²⁴ Violations of numerous rules imposed by individual landlords could also result in evictions. For many tenants, it was not permitted to have a stranger stay overnight or it was not permitted for two families to live in the same house. When, for example, a widow invited her daughter, who had lost her husband, to share her home then the widow was evicted.²⁵

Such evictions were part of the history of Irish-Americans in Bloomington. My great-grandfather married Mary Genevieve Lyons on November 8, 1887. One family story is that the family of Mary's mother, Catherine Lyons, was dispossessed of its home by an Englishman. The family had permitted the man to stay in their home overnight as an act of kindness. Soon thereafter, he, the English visitor to whom they had extended their kindness, claimed their tenancy because of their transgression of permitting him in their home overnight.²⁶

Mary Lyons Dunn worked in the book bindery for the Pantagraph before her marriage. In 1884, the Pantagraph was printing handbills for distribution in Ireland because it was illegal for Irish presses to publish such items. One Notice printed by the Pantagraph for distribution in Ireland read:



Mary Lyons Dunn (1862-1946)

NOTICE!

As three emergency tradesmen are repairing the boycotted house in Bridge street, Callan, for Paddien Dunne, the boycotted baker and landgrabber.

Now we call the public not to employ Danny Langford, the slater, Tom Berney, mason, nor Pat Byrne, the carpenter, or any other men who will work for him.

Men of Kilkenny and Tipperary, shun Paddien and his boycotted bread cart. Remember, he employed the Crow Bar Brigade to drive a family from their home. Be true to yourselves and to each other. Shun boycotted shop boys who gave him timber. Let labour mind himself.

"GOD SAVE IRELAND"²⁷

The Crow Bar Brigade was probably a contingent of British Yeomen employed by landlords to enforce eviction orders. It is certain that Irish-Americans like Mary Lyons Dunn were more than happy to devote their time to printing anti-British handbills.²⁸

In September 1885, Bloomington's Parnell division of the Irish-American Land League was established with twenty-five charter members.²⁹ P. Kealy, a partner in the dry goods business of Kealy & Lawlor at 101 East Front Street, was selected president; and Frank A. Gregory, a clerk who lived at 1215 North Mason Street, was its secretary. A few weeks later, the Hon. Alexander Sullivan of Chicago, one of the national leaders of the Irish-American Land League, spoke at Bloomington's Durley Theater.³⁰ Sullivan's political influence (or the influence of his Irish-American brothers in Bloomington) was so strong that he was joined on stage by Bloomington's mayor Benjamin Funk, its City Attorney, and several other prominent citizens. This new organization was predominately Republican in its membership; and therefore, some Irish-American Democrats in Bloomington again refused to contribute either their moral or financial support.³¹ But Condon, who in 1884 had opposed the Irish-American Blaine and Logan Club, this time supported the Irish-American Land League movement. This Democratic support for a predominately Republican organization would serve as a template for an Irish-American political machine that developed in Bloomington throughout most of the 1890's. That machine was also composed of Irish-Americans from both parties.

In late November 1885, a large meeting of the Parnell division met at the Hibernian Hall at 109 South Madison Street. More than 100 Irishmen were reported present. Speeches were made by Owen Scott, Patrick Dixon, William Condon, Sr., William Condon, Jr., Edmund O'Connell and J.J. Morrissey. Again the organization was set up along the ward boundaries of the city, and representatives from each ward were appointed to canvass those areas for financial support. The committee members were as follows:

First Ward - P. Kealy, Thomas Maloney, Phil Ryan.

Second Ward - James Ferry, P. Madden, John Egan, Thomas Keogh, P. M. Gilchrist.

Third Ward - James Flynn, W. F. Holland, Paul Finnan, and Wm. Ryan.

Fourth Ward - Dennis Fogarty, Mr. Long, Daniel Leary, Chas. Long, Mike Leary, and

John Hillihan.

Fifth Ward - Daniel O'Neil, Dan Touhey, John Regan, P. Dixon, Capt. Sweeney, John Moore, Wm. McGrath, James Donovan.

Sixth Ward - E. O'Connell, J. J. Morrissey, J. D. Sullivan, Richard Dunn, James Bloomer.

Town of Merna - Wm. Condon, Sr., John Hanley, Michael Gould, and Ed Sweeney.³²



Daniel O'Neil

Who were these Irishmen? As mentioned above, Kealy was a partner in Kealy & Lawlor. In March 1886 Kealy was elected recording secretary of Bloomington's Young Republican Club.³³ Tom Maloney worked for the street car company.³⁴ Phil Ryan owned a hardware store. Madden was a laborer. Egan was a shoemaker. According to the 1884 city directory, Tom Keogh had a saloon at 412 North Main Street. James Flynn

had a saloon at 111 South Center, where he also lived. Paul Finnan had a saloon at 105 North Center, and Dan O'Neil was a partner in O'Neil Brothers Grocery. Gilchrist, William Ryan, John Regan, John Moore, James Donovan, and Ed Sweeney all worked for the Chicago & Alton railroad in capacities such as machinist, brakeman, blacksmith, and laborer. Other division members were local teamsters, blacksmiths, painters and firefighters. Dick Dunn and Bill McGrath were both moulders for the Soper & Rogers foundry.³⁵ J. J. Morrissey and Ed O'Connell were lawyers. O'Connell was an Assistant States Attorney for McLean County. In early 1886 O'Connell was elected Second Vice President of the Young Republican Club and later elected to serve as one of the twelve members of the G.O.P. Central Committee.³⁶ The descendants of these Irishmen are spread throughout Bloomington and across the United States.

Bloomington's Parnell division of the Irish-American Land League met several times after the November 1885 meeting.³⁷ In early December the division met to report progress on the fund raising campaign.³⁸ Another meeting was held on December 23, 1885, with an invitation extended to every Irishman and sympathizer with Ireland to be present.³⁹ How much the Parnell division of the Irish-American Land League was able to raise does not seem to have been reported in the local press. However, in January 1886, a meeting of the Irish National Land League was held in Chicago; and during that meeting, the treasurer reported that between the time of its late August 1885 organizational meeting and January 1886, \$100,000 had been raised to support Parnell and members of his party.⁴⁰ Ultimate success for the Irish independence movement lay many years in the future, but the dam did begin to crack in early 1886 when the Queen Victoria of England addressed parliament and promised to introduce legislation to facilitate the sale of Irish land and reform landlord tenant relations.⁴¹ The financial support from Bloomington's Irish-Americans helped the Irish Land League members in Parliament in the crucial months of late 1885 and early 1886.

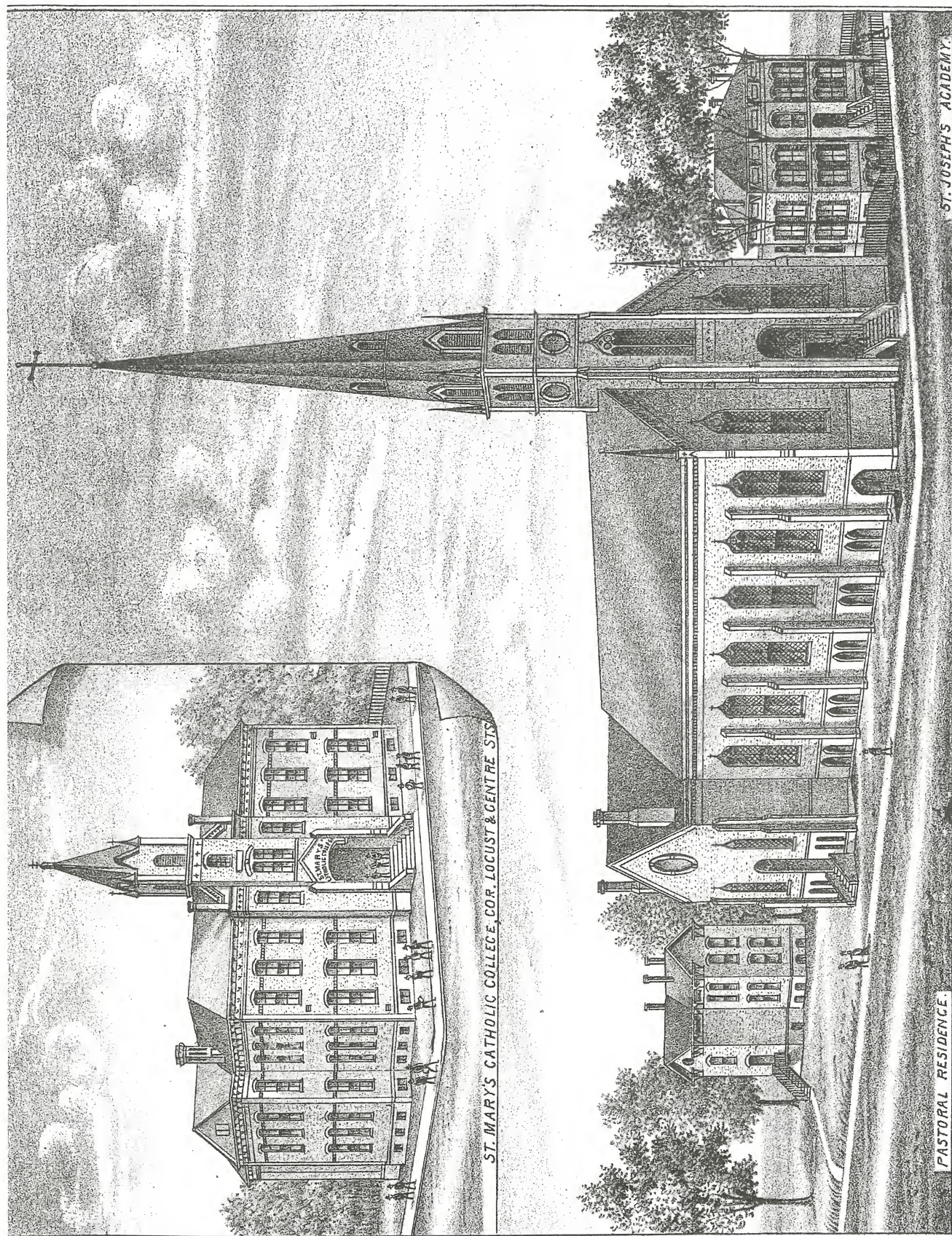
The Holy Trinity Church Annual Fairs

The official position of the Catholic Church stood in opposition to Irish national agitation. In

June of 1882, Irish bishops wrote a letter to the Catholic churches there in support of peaceful agitation for their rights, but in condemnation of secret societies such as the Land League.⁴² In late April 1883, the Pope issued a papal bull condemning Irish national agitation in both America and Ireland.⁴³ The Pope's opposition to Irish national organizations was largely condemned in the United States, where an ever-expanding number of Catholic churches served as a hub for Irish Catholic activities.⁴⁴

In 1879, the estimated population of Bloomington was 18,000; and of this number, the Catholic population numbered about 6,000.⁴⁵ Most of these were Irish Catholics who had been streaming out of Ireland into the United States and then pushing west across this country.⁴⁶ In the 1880's Holy Trinity Catholic Church was the center of Irish-Catholic life in Bloomington. The Catholic Church's opposition to the Land League did not seem to discourage participation in the business of Holy Trinity parish.

Father Weldon became the pastor of a debt-ridden Holy Trinity parish on July 2, 1879. He was a middle-aged man at the time of his assignment by Bishop Spalding and "was by nature a very friendly sort of man. His smile beamed good will to all men. . . . He greeted everyone with a smile and a handshake."⁴⁷ At the time Father Weldon assumed his duties, the parish was over \$48,000 in debt - a huge amount at that time. The reasons for the debt load within the parish are somewhat complex and are summarized as follows. From September 25, 1874 until January 1, 1875, the Rev. Father Costa, I.C. (i.e., The Institute of Charity) had served as pastor of the parish. Father Costa lost the financial support of the parish on account of his attacks from the pulpit on drink and drunkards. As Monsignor Moore delicately explained some years later, "He was a saintly priest, and he observed from the start that there was excess of drinking among the members of his congregation Being a zealous and saintly priest, he assailed the evil with all the eloquence he could command. He not only attached intemperance as a sin, but he denounced the keepers of saloons for selling liquor to a man who might be on the verge of intoxication."⁴⁸ The saloon keepers, who were the guardians of the laborers' informal clubs, opposed Father Costa; and he lost their financial support too. Father



Holy Trinity Church, 1887 Corner of Chestnut and Main, Bloomington.

Costa had been followed as pastor by Reverend Michael McDermott (January 5, 1875 - July 1, 1879), who himself had come to the United States from Ireland. Father McDermott was said to be a man of fine personality, but only 32 years old at the time of his appointment. He almost immediately became responsible for the construction of the new Catholic Church at a great cost and was forced to borrow money to complete the church. Toward the end of his pastorate, Father McDermott became ill and had to be replaced by Father Weldon.⁴⁹

Within two years, Father Weldon had reduced the debt to only \$22,000.00.⁵⁰ The financial affairs of the church were entrusted by Father Weldon to a thirty-five man committee led by some familiar Irish names: William Condon, President; Daniel O'Neil, treasurer; and C. R. Stacey, secretary. As with so many clubs and organizations at the time, the parish finance committee was again established according to the political wards of the city: four from the First Ward, eight from the Second Ward; four from the Third Ward; eight from the Fifth Ward; and four from the Sixth Ward. It is safe to assume that this division proportionately paralleled the number of Roman Catholics who lived in those wards.⁵¹

Next to pew rental, the largest income item on Holy Trinity Church's income statement came from the annual fair. The Irish Catholics of Holy Trinity parish had conducted an annual church fair from at least 1871.⁵² The annual church fair was patterned after the town fairs which were an essential part of the economic and social life in Ireland. In the area of Wexford County, Ireland, where the Dunn family had lived, fairs were quite common. In 1885, it was reported that "[t]he markets of the county have many novel features. They are attended by men and women to whom it is the business of life to go from one to another, and spread out cheap wares. Brogue-makers display their handiwork on single boards, stretched from trestles, and upon donkey-carts; glass and delf repose upon straw and hay, often in the middle of the roadway; perambulating clothiers lay out the contents of huge chests under lightly constructed tents. . . . The fairs throughout the county are numerous, in this respect forming a striking contrast to the condition of things one hundred years ago. Well-attended fairs and markets are to a town or village what water is to a mill-

wheel. They put motion into every branch of effort which depends for success upon the wants of farmers. In most instances additional fairs have brought additional business to the towns"⁵³ The rural Irish communities depended on their periodic fairs to supply a market for locally produced crops, to attract manufactured goods for sale and barter, and to interact socially.

The church fairs at Holy Trinity were organized and conducted largely by the Irish-Catholic women of the parish. These women were often the wives of the same men who participated in such organizations as the Irish-American Blaine and Logan Club and the Parnell division of the Irish-American Land League. In the 1880's the typical church fair at Holy Trinity lasted from ten days to two weeks in late September, October, or early November each year. The fairs were conducted in the church basement. The basement area of the church was divided up into booths. Each booth was sponsored by the women who lived in the same areas as Bloomington's political wards. For example, in 1883 the Second Ward table was in the charge of Mrs. John Egan, Mrs. Langdon, and Mrs. William McCarthy. The Third Ward table was arranged and operated by Mrs. Thomas White, Miss Logan, Miss Delia Bergen, Miss Kate Long, Miss O'Day, Mrs. Long. Miss Ella Finley and Miss Mollie Walsh had charge of the Fourth Ward booth. The Fifth Ward booth was operated by Mrs. Donovan, Mrs. Kane and Miss McGuire; while the Sixth Ward table was operated by Mrs. J. O'Brien and Mrs. Bloomer.⁵⁴ The church choir also had a booth that was operated by Mrs. Kealy and Mrs. Lawler (whose respective husbands operated Kealy & Lawler), and Mrs. Dodson. The refreshment stand at the fair was operated by Kate Sweeney, Nellie Quinn, Nora Holley, and Minnie Connors.⁵⁵

The church fair was no small project. Daily attendance estimates ranged from 1,000 to 1,500. Activities were planned for each evening; and these centered around various local professions including the merchant tailors, boot and shoemakers, furniture makers, and butchers.⁵⁶ Valuable prizes were donated and awarded, including a gold headed cane, an upholstered easy chair, a cow horn chair, a locomotive cab lamp, and gold men's and women's watches. Entertainment was provided in the form of short plays by the children of the parish and a group

described only as a "colored quartet."⁵⁷ Prizes were frequently awarded based on elections for the most popular contestant, for most popular young man, or most popular young woman; and it appears that votes could be purchased by buying tickets for a ballot - excellent training for a future political life. Years later Monsignor Moore noted that the church fairs enjoyed the "general enthusiasm on the part of everyone to help with the project - for instance, the ladies who were nominated in the voting contest were none of them members of the congregation, but wives of prominent civic leaders."⁵⁸

The Irish have a tradition of protracted celebrations. One form of the extended holiday in Ireland was known as the "Pattern," which celebrated the patron saint of the local Catholic parish. Irish celebrations like the Pattern and church fairs are said to liberate individuals from the mundane structure of everyday life and to be a platform for social communion and comradeship. One author writes that the "sense of community produced by the festival makes the individual feel indissolubly a part of a biological collectivity outside of all temporal organization, whether social, economic, or political, 'a member of the people's mass body', . . ."⁵⁹ The church fairs in the 1880's filled three roles by providing substantial financial support to the parish, a milieu for social interaction, and a link to the participants' Irish homeland.

For the Irish-Catholic men and women of our city, their love of homeland was not something that emerged on Saint Patrick's Day each year or with a few songs of the old sod on the major holidays. Our Irish ancestors continued to live and practice their Irish heritage and their belief in Irish independence and to act on that heritage and those beliefs in virtually every aspect of their daily lives. While the United States was in a period of transition, Irish-Americans in Central Illinois were making their own transition from their homeland to a new land. Organizations and activities such as the Irish-American Blaine and Logan Club, the Parnell division of the Irish-American Land League, and the Holy Trinity Church annual fair were essential to this transition in two ways. They tied our ancestors to their past, while simultaneously involving them in the political, economic and social life of Bloomington. While the Illinois prairie air breathed by Irish-

Americans in Bloomington was pure and free, their hearts were locked firmly on the jewel of the Atlantic.

1. The *Daily Pantagraph*, Mar. 18, 1886, at 4, col. 5.
2. The *Daily Pantagraph*, Nov. 15, 1884, at 1, col. 1.
3. The *Daily Pantagraph*, Jun. 30, 1884, at 2, col. 3, reported on "Blaine and the Irish." The article reported that Blaine had been "always a steady champion of the Irish, and - what is nearly as good - a stout opponent of British interests. His conduct, especially in 1867-68, will be long gratefully remembered by Irishmen. When, in 1867, Augustus Costello was arrested in Ireland for a 'treasonable' speech delivered by him in New York, two years previously, and sentenced to fifteen years penal servitude, Blaine, who was a Republican leader in Congress, made a series of powerful speeches in his behalf and in behalf of Gen. D. F. Burke and others, which eventually succeeded in securing their liberation. The Irishmen had their papers of American citizenship in their possession, but they were disregarded as a defense, or as a protection against British law, and this aroused much excitement and indignation in the states. . . . England, being well frightened, caved in as became her. Costello, Burke, and the rest were released. This triumph was mainly due to the masterly advocacy of Blaine, and the leaning he then showed toward Irishmen has not relaxed." The article went on to report that "amongst the English who do not like him [he is described as] 'the greatest Jingo of the western world.'"
4. The *Daily Pantagraph*, Jun. 11, 1884, at 1, col. 5.
5. Id.
6. The *Daily Pantagraph*, Aug. 19, 1884, at 1, col. 6.
7. The *Daily Pantagraph*, Nov. 12, 1885, at 3, col. 5: "J. G. White's Latest"; Apr. 10, 1885, at 4, col. 4: "White's Rebellion"; Apr. 4, 1885, at 1, col. 6: "White's Rebellion"; Apr. 3, 1885, at 1, col. 5: "White's Rebellion"; Apr. 2, 1885, at 4, col. 5: "White In Bloomington"; Apr. 2, 1885, at 1, col. 4: "The White Rebellion"; Mar. 31, 1885, at 1, col. 3: "Religious Riot at Lincoln."

8. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Jun. 11, 1884, at 4, col. 4

9. *Id.*

10. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Jul. 21, 1884, at 1, col. 4: "The Irish Press: The Irish Americans and Catholic Journalists Charge on Cleveland Horse and Foot."

11. This club was by no means the first Irish-American club in Bloomington in the 1880's. For example, in 1881 an organization known as the Ancient Order of Irish Citizens had been established. Its officers were Phillip Ryan, chairman, and P. Kealy, secretary. Members included alderman William Condon, future alderman James Costello, a Bloomington magistrate, Ed O'Connell, Patrick Dixon, Paul Finan, Luke Nevin, P.M. Gilchrist and J. Regan. See, *The Daily Bulletin*, Dec. 6, 1881, at 4, col. 4: "The Irish Meeting;" and *The Daily Bulletin*, Dec. 31, 1881, at 4, col. 5: "Irishmen Attention." Bloomington also had an active chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and in January 1883 they had purchased the old Turner Hall on South Madison Street. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Jan. 20, 1883, at 4, col. 3: "The Ancient Order of Hibernians Purchase Turner Hall." In October 1883, the Irish of Bloomington met to collect funds for the defense of Patrick O'Donnell, an Irish Land League leader who had murdered a discovered informer. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Oct. 31, 1883, at 4, col. 5: "Meeting of Irishmen." O'Donnell was tried, convicted and hung in London at 8:02 a.m. on December 17, 1883. The report of his death was published in *The Daily Pantagraph's* December 17th morning addition, having been transmitted via the trans-Atlantic cable from London to New York and Western Union telegraph to Bloomington. See *The Daily Pantagraph*, Dec. 18, 1883, at 3, col. 5: "Fast Time - How the Hanging of O'Donnell Was Flashed From London to Bloomington in Less Than Five Minutes."

12. Daniel Leary's great-grandson David Leary played football with me in high school, though I never knew of the association. His grandson Daniel (Arlo) Leary was one of my coaches in grade school football. John Sullivan was the grandfather of Bob Sullivan, a Bloomington attor-

ney who was the long time bankruptcy trustee here and who died only a few years ago. A member of the Gregory family married a Deneen, and her grandchildren David and Dan Deneen, are respectively, a stock broker and attorney here.

13. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Oct. 15, 1884, at 3, col. 4.

14. In 1884 the ward boundaries were: First Ward - all that portion of the city bounded on the north by Chestnut street, south by Front Street, east by the city limits, and west by Main Street; Second Ward - all that portion of the city bounded on the north by Chestnut Street, south by Front Street, east by Main Street, and west by the city limits; Third Ward - all that portion of the city bounded on the north by Front Street, south by the city limits, east by Main Street, and west by the city limits; Fourth Ward - all that portion of the city bounded on the north by Front Street, the south and east by the city limits, and the west by Main Street; Fifth Ward - all that portion of the city bounded on the north by the city limits, south by Chestnut Street, east by Lee Street, and on the west by the city limits; Sixth Ward - all that portion of the city bounded on the north by the city limits, south by Chestnut Street, east by the city limits, and on the west by Lee Street..

15. See e.g., *The Daily Pantagraph*, Oct. 16, 1884, at 3, col. 5: "An Irish Republican - Mr. J. D. Sullivan Has a Few Words For Mr. Condon . . ." A descendant of Condon married Gerry Bradley, a long-time state legislator and owner of Bloomington Tent and Awning Company. Ed Condon of Bloomington is another William Condon descendant, and his wife Ginger works for Commerce Bank.

16. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Oct. 17, 1884, at 4, col. 4: "Democrats of the West Side."

17. *Id.*

18. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Oct. 25, 1884, at 4, col. 3: "Two Days Doings." This article reported: "The [welcoming] procession had scarcely halted at the depot, when, to their great surprise, the train carrying the distinguished gentleman darted by, not stopping at the union depot at all, and a few seconds later whistled on brakes at the

Chestnut street crossing. The procession then countermarched back to Morris avenue, and thence north to the old freight depot near Chestnut street, where the train had stopped. When the procession was within a block or so of the train, the train whistled out and soon was turning wheels, and that rapidly, for the metropolis [i.e., Chicago]. The procession then marched to the square and disbanded."

19. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Nov. 17, 1884, at 1, col. 3: "Cleveland is the Name of the Next President of these United States, The Official Count Seals the Fate of Republicanism for Four Years, What the Bigoted Utterance of a Reverend Crank Cost Mr. Blaine and the Nation, The Defeated Candidate Meets His Overthrow With the Spirit of a Man and a Patriot, Paying a Glowing Tribute to the Faithfulness Manhood and Eloquence of Irish Republicans, And an Acknowledgment of the Cordial Support of the German People, Some Speculation as to President Cleveland's Views on the Laws of Civil Service."

20. Blaine was also the victim of another smear campaign accusing him of having secretly married a woman, Harriet Stanwood, at Millersburg, Kentucky in June of 1850. The claim was that his subsequent marriage was not legal because of his prior undisclosed marriage to Stanwood. These allegations were printed by the Indianapolis Sentinel, and Blaine then filed a libel suit against the Sentinel in federal court in Indianapolis. The complaint was dismissed after Blaine lost the election.

21. The Irish in Illinois had been long-time supporters of Irish independence. On November 23, 1863, John O'Mahoney of Chicago had organized the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood also known as the Fenian Society or Fenian Conspiracy. In Ireland, the Fenians established an Irish newspaper, the *Irish People*, that agitated for Irish independence.

22. R. Barry O'Brien, *Fifty Years of Concessions to Ireland* at 24-25, citing 2 Anne, cap.6.

23. *Id.* at 266.

24. *Id.* at 271

25. *Id.* at 273.

26. Exactly when this incident happened is not known. Most evictions resulted in the family leaving Ireland. Mary's grandfather, Daniel Lyons, was born in 1808 in County Kerry, Ireland. Naturalization records indicate that he became a United States citizen on January 13, 1858 after five years residency in the United States and one year in Illinois. See, Nat. Rec. Bk. 1853-1896, p. 88. From this I infer that the Daniel Lyons family must have left Ireland in about 1852 during the great period of evictions.

27. *The Weekly Pantagraph*, Apr. 15, 1884, at 6, col. 3.

28. Alonzo Dolan another Irish-American was working as a foreman at The Pantagraph in 1884. His descendants continue to own and operate Pantagraph Printing and Stationary. Many Irish-American printers during this period in history had fled Ireland because they had been charged with sedition for printing handbills such as the one referred to in the text above. About this same time, Dolan had joined the Bloomington Young Republicans club.

29. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Sep. 7, 1885, at 3, col. 5.

30. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Oct. 20, 1885, at 4, col. 5: "The Cause of Ireland - An Able Address by Hon. Alexander Sullivan of Chicago."

31. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Oct. 27, 1885, at 4, col. 5: "Partisans First, Nationalists Later - A Few Words to the Democratic Patriots Who Back-Capped Sullivan Because He is a Republican."

32. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Nov. 20, 1885, at 4, col. 5: "Aid for Ireland." The Bulletin, Nov. 20, 1885, at 5, col. 2: "A Meeting of Representative Irishmen at Hibernian Hall a Grand Success."

33. *The Weekly Bulletin*, Mar. 5, 1886, at 1, col. 1: "The Young Republicans Reorganize."

34. Tom Maloney's grandson is now the popular pastor of Epiphany Church in Normal, Illinois.

35. Richard Dunn would become a Bloomington policeman on May 4, 1886. Positions on the

police force were highly coveted in the 1880's and 1890's. There was no civil service at the time, and a policeman's appointment to the force had to be renewed every year in about early April. It appears that these positions were parceled out by the victorious party in the spring election for mayor and aldermen and that each respective ward would be given consideration. It is safe to assume that Richard Dunn's work with the Blaine and Logan club in 1884 and the Parnell division of the Irish-American Land League helped him gain a position on the police force. In the Parnell division of the Irish-American Land League he served on the Sixth Ward team with Ed O'Connell. As mentioned earlier, O'Connell was elected a member of the Republican Central Committee in early April 1886 and probably had influence in the selection of at least one officer to the force.

36. *The Weekly Bulletin*, Mar. 5, 1886, at 1, col. 1: "The Young Republicans Reorganize;" and, Apr. 2, 1886, at 1, col. 1: "Thomas and Tol."

37. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Nov. 30, 1885, at 3, col. 4: "The Sorrow of the Irish Citizens." The *Bulletin*, Nov. 30, 1885, at 4, col. 3: "The League."

38. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Dec. 3, 1885, at 4, col. 4: "The Cause of Ireland."

39. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Dec. 23, 1885, at 3, col. 5: "The Land League Meeting."

40. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Jan. 21, 1886, at 1, col. 7: "Irish League - The Executive Committee of the Irish National League Held an Interesting Meeting in Chicago."

41. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Jan. 22, 1886, at 1, col. 5: "The Irish Question."

42. *The Daily Bulletin*, Jun. 15, 1882, at 2, col. 2: "The Irish Bishops Address."

43. *The Daily Pantagraph*, May 24, 1883, at 1, col. 5: "Ireland and the Pope;" and Jun. 4, 1883, at 1, col. 7: "The Pope's Circular."

44. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Jun. 6, 1883, at 1, col. 6: "Pope Leo XIII Answered;" Jun. 11, 1883, at 1, col. 6: "The Pope Defied;" and Jun. 18, 1883, at 1, col. 7: "Ireland vs. Rome."

45. S. N. Moore, *Holy Trinity Parish*, at 48 (1952). In 1850 the population of Bloomington had been about 1,600 persons; and in 1852 when the first Catholic mass was celebrated here, there were supposed to have been eighteen or nineteen present for the celebration or only about 2% of the city's population.

46. The Irish Census of 1851 disclosed a decrease in the population of Ireland in the ten years after 1841 of 1,622,789 people. Over that ten year period 1,240,737 people had left Ireland for the United States, Canada, or Australia. According to statistical tables 910,470 (73.4%) of those had entered the United States. See, *Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. VI, Art. VI - The Irish Census at 819-833.

47. *Id.* at 150-51.

48. *Id.* at 124-25.

49. *Id.* at 127-49.

50. *The Daily Bulletin*, Aug. 30, 1881, at 4, col. 5: "Our Catholic Friends;" and Feb. 12, 1882, at 2, col. 4: "Father Weldon's Church."

51. The Fourth Ward (i.e., the area of the city south of Front Street and west of Main Street) was the area populated by German Catholics who attended St. Mary's Church. St. Mary's had its own annual fair. Assuming that the Fourth Ward Catholic population was about 500 persons, then there were about 5,500 Catholics in the five wards making up Holy Trinity parish. If the number of members of the finance committee is somewhat proportional, then there were over 3,100 Catholics living in the Second Ward and the Fifth Ward (i.e., the area of the city north of Front Street and west of Main Street as far north as Chestnut Street, then west along Chestnut to Lee Street and then north on Lee Street to the city limits).

52. S. N. Moore, *Holy Trinity Parish*, at 109-111 (1952).

53. G. H. Bassett, *Wexford County Guide and Directory*, at 14-15 (1885).

54. Mr. and Mrs. James Bloomer, it appears, were

the parents of Margaret Bloomer, who joined the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in 1878 and became Sister Francis Clare.

55. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Oct. 27, 1883, at 4, col. 5: "A Palace of a Place." The women with stars by their names were the wives or daughters of identified members of one of the two organizations discussed earlier in this paper.

56. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Oct. 29, 1883, at 4, col. 4: "The Catholic Fair;" Oct. 30, 1883, at 4, col. 4: "The Catholic Fair;" Oct. 31, 1883, at 4, col. 5: "The Catholic Fair;" Nov. 1, 1883, at 4, col. 4: "The Catholic Fair;" Nov. 3, 1883, at 4, col. 6: "The Catholic Fair."

57. *The Daily Pantagraph*, Sep. 19, 1885, at 4, col. 6: "The Catholic Fair;" Sep. 21, 1885, at 4, col. 4: "The Fair at Holy Trinity;" Sep. 22, 1885, at 4, col. 4: "The Catholic Fair at Holy Trinity;"

59. J. S. Donnelly, jr. & Kerby A. Miller, *Irish Popular Culture 1650-1850*, Ch. 8 at 212-13 (citing M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world* (1984)).

58. S. N. Moore, *Holy Trinity Parish*, at 111 (1952).

Irish Immigrant Son Patrick Morrissey Built Rail Brotherhood

by Mike Matejka

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Patrick H. Morrissey (1862-1916)

Patrick H. Morrissey, son of an Bloomington Irish track worker, rose through railroad union ranks to head the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT), rebuilding that organization after the 1894 Pullman strike.

Morrissey and his brothers reflected an Irish-American tradition, rising through politics and union activity to respected social positions.

Morrissey was born in Bloomington on September 11, 1862, the son of John and Mary Morrissey. His father had risen from track worker to a Chicago & Alton Railroad section foreman. A "section" was a length of the railroad, one to two miles long, to which a maintenance crew was assigned. The crews replaced ties, aligned rails and ballasted the roadbed. For many years the Morrissey family resided at 803 W. Monroe Street in Bloomington.

Education

Young Patrick enjoyed something few working class children enjoyed in the 1870s — an education. While most working class children had some sporadic primary school education at ward schools, Patrick Morrissey achieved a high school diploma, graduating from Bloomington High School in 1879.

High school was reserved for middle and upper class children, women being cultivated for later marriage or men who were slated for professional careers. Few working class families could afford the luxury of a long education for their children. Morrissey's class was predominately female, with 22 females and five males. Amongst his classmates were Lizzie Irons, the first woman to win the O'Henry Prize for fiction; Fred Haggard, a missionary to India and later secretary of the American Baptist Missionary Union; and, Gordon M. Lillie, who won his fame as "Pawnee Bill," traveling the nation with a one thousand horse wild west show.

Morrissey worked through his school years as a railroad "call boy." Before the telephone these young men would roust train crews for their next run. This included rapping on bedroom windows in the middle of the night, or tracking down trainmen at restaurants, poker games or taverns.

Safety

With graduation, Morrissey continued on the Chicago & Alton Railroad, working first as a clerk, then as a passenger and freight brakeman and as a conductor. Railroading was a dangerous occupation in the late 19th century. The cars and most bridges were made of wood. Trains did not have air brakes, so workers had to scramble car to car and turn hand brakes to stop a train.

Dangerous link and pin couplers required workers to insert themselves between moving freight cars to couple them together. Many rail workers could not buy life insurance, because of their high accident rate.

In response, rail workers began to organize mutual insurance societies. The engineers led the way in 1863, founding the Brotherhood of the Footboard, which became the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Bloomington's engineers were quick to affiliate with this new organization. These groups were patterned after fraternal organizations and used ceremonies similar to Masonic organizations for their rituals and rites. If a worker was seriously injured or killed, the "brotherhood" passed the hat, each member required to make a donation, usually 50 cents or one dollar, to the victim or his family.

In 1883 a group of trainmen met in a caboose on the Delaware and Hudson Railroad and formed the Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen. In 1890 it became the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT).

Two years later, in February 1885, Bloomington trainmen formed a lodge. Morrissey was a charter member and was elected by his co-workers to attend the union's third convention at Burlington, Iowa.

Union Leadership

While there young Morrissey caught the eye of S.E. Wilkinson, the organization's newly elected "Grand Master." Morrissey was offered a job as a clerk in the union's office, which included editing the *BRT Journal*.

In 1889 Morrissey was elected First Vice-Grand Master, traveling the country to organize new lodges.

As railroad companies continued to consolidate and workers found themselves helpless before large corporations, the brotherhoods began to transform themselves from fraternal insurance societies to unions. In an industry that continued to take life and limb while offering low wages, unsafe conditions and irregular hours, more than burial insurance was necessary.

Pushing for this change was Eugene V. Debs, general secretary of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen (BLF). Debs wanted rail workers to unite in one organization. Strikes

were often lost amongst rail workers because one brotherhood would break the other's strikes. Debs left the BLF in 1892 and launched the American Railway Union (ARU), seeking to unite all rail workers in one organization.

After an amazing ARU victory over the Great Northern Railroad, rail workers flocked to join the new union, many maintaining dual memberships in the brotherhoods. But Debs' dream came crashing in the summer of 1894, when his young union, against his advice, decided to boycott Pullman cars, supporting striking Pullman workers in South Chicago. The strike spread quickly and rail workers honored the call, but it was broken when the United States intervened, sending federal troops in to break the strike. Dozens were killed in urban riots, particularly in Chicago, and Debs was jailed, the ARU collapsing. The nation was in economic recession and many rail workers were blacklisted for their strike activities.

It was this bleak scene that faced Morrissey in 1895, when he was elected Grand Master of the BRT. The union was down to 10,000 members and was \$105,000 in debt.

Morrissey quickly began rebuilding the BRT. By the time he left the organization in 1909 the membership stood at 120,000, with \$2 million in the insurance fund and a \$1.5 million strike fund.

Unity

Following the lead of Debs, Morrissey emphasized unity and mutual support amongst the brotherhoods. In 1897 he forged a cooperation agreement, but this only lasted three years. In 1902 the Order of Railway Conductors and BRT united, winning contract breakthroughs from western railroads and building a new pattern for the union.

Under Morrissey's leadership, the BRT and the ORT drew the country into three districts — western, eastern and southern. Rather than negotiating with railroads individually, the negotiated by the region. This prevented the companies from playing conditions on one line against its neighbors. This system brought the workday down to ten hours a day and won a pay increase. This trend continued through 1915, when rail workers gained their "100 mile" rule, setting that mileage as a day's standard work. Morrissey also established a home for aged and disabled trainmen,

which opened in Highland Park, Illinois in 1910.

Morrissey was recognized as one of the leading speakers for the brotherhoods and supported other, non-rail workers seeking unionization. The rail brotherhoods were often accused of "aloofness" toward other workers and their struggles, but not Morrissey in his leadership of the BRT. AFL President Samuel Gompers remembered Morrissey as one of 20 "outstanding fellows" who answered his call to support West Virginia coal miners in 1902.

After leaving the BRT in 1909, Morrissey worked for five years in Chicago with the American Association of Railway Employees and Investors, an attempt to build worker power through investment in rail companies. Arbitration was often used in contract disputes, and Morrissey was frequently called to represent the union side on national arbitration panels.

In 1914 Morrissey became an assistant to the president of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, working out of Galesburg. In May 1916 he was diagnosed with a "nervous breakdown," which was actually a brain tumor. He died in Galesburg at age 54 on November, 25, 1916.

Family legacy

While Patrick Morrissey went onto national

fame, his brothers also used education and politics to forge a local legacy within Democratic politics. His younger brother Michael followed Patrick into train service. Michael lost a leg in 1898 in a rail accident. He then turned to politics, was elected Bloomington police magistrate, went to law school at Illinois Wesleyan University, opened a successful law practice and served frequently as a labor arbitrator. He was an active Democrat and served as Bloomington postmaster during Democratic administrations. Brother James served the Bloomington Fire Department, retiring as an assistant chief, while brother John served on the Bloomington Election Commission. Another brother, William Morrissey, left Bloomington for Denver, where he was also active in labor affairs, wrote for the *Denver Post* and served on the Colorado Boxing Commission.

Eulogizing Patrick Morrissey's legacy, the BRT's *Railroad Trainman* wrote on his death in 1916 that because of his efforts "...a feeling of confidence and co-operation was instilled in the men, the great work of reorganization commenced and it never has stopped." Morrissey is buried at Galesburg's St. Joseph Cemetery, where the BRT erected a monument over his grave.

The American Hartnett Family

by John Jordan Moore

Michael Hartnett (1832-1919), late of Chenoa, might have taken more of a hand in the history of my immediate tribe than has hitherto been supposed.

Once, it was known that Cousin Mike

...was born ...in county Limerick, near New Castle, Ireland, and emigrated to the United States in 1862, settling at Lexington[He] followed railroading for a number of years after coming to America...

and one man with whom (or for whom) he almost certainly worked, possibly into the early 1870s, was William Cotter (1824-1899).

Now, Great-Great-Great-"Uncle Billy" was a man with four particular problems; and Mike Hartnett may have been the man with one, particular solution.

Much of the Cotters' social life through the 1860s would, I think, have been bound up with the solution of Billy's problems - with the introduction of the Casey nieces into local Irish male society. Bridget Morrissey Cotter (1838-1918) likely held "open house" for a succession of eligible bachelors who came to her attention through the Irish housewives' infallible intelligence network; and the word was out, up and down the C.&A.R.R. main line, that the section boss at Towanda had four, marriageable nieces at his table and was on the look-out for sober, industrious, Irish Catholic lads.

Rivers and trails run through some family histories - a railroad runs through mine. And, if my mother had not photographically recalled everything her aunt told her that farther ancestors told her, there wouldn't have been anything to write at all.

Mike Hartnett's passing mention ("...Mahriss, m'Uncle Ed's youngest a fine, fine boy, Billy, fresh

off the boat.") would naturally have resulted in a dinner invitation, or perhaps in an artfully contrived meeting at a church social.

And just where was this paragon? According to our best, surviving information, he

...worked on a farm when first arriving in this country, and studied the art of proper dairying¹

and, of course, that could have been anyone's farm - including the John Degnans' place, in Pike Township, north of Chenoa.



Mary Casey Hartnett
(1851-1906)

Maurice Hartnett and Mary Casey were married at Holy Trinity, here in Bloomington, on October 27, 1869. As likely as not, neither was then living in this city - neither appears in the 1870 census returns, and my great-grandfather was not listed in a Bloomington city directory until 1873. In those early days, when the circuit-riding Catholic priest was not yet a curiosity, the church here drew its sacramental business from a truly vast expanse of central Illinois. True, there were "on-again-off-again" churches operating out in the hinterlands - waxing and waning with the supply of priests - but the cardinal points of mid-century Catholicism hereabouts were still only three, Peoria, Bloomington and Champaign.

But if the newlywed Hartnetts were not Bloomington residents on the day of their nuptials, they lost little time in so becoming. On February 15, 1870, my great-grandfather bought

a lot at the southeast corner of Jefferson and Howard streets; this was then very near the westernmost extremity of the settled area, about two blocks east of the C.&A.R.R. right-of-way. Here, in the following spring, Maurice Hartnett, "himself", began to raise a small house - a house which can still be seen, standing exactly where he put it.

Grandmother Jordan's birthplace is an exceptionally sturdy little building. It is underpinned with railroad "sleepers" and has mistakenly been referred to as one of the "pioneer" residences on the West Side. In its prime, 828 West Jefferson Street was a bustling address. From 1871 to 1880, the little house was continuously crowded with the small people who were born there, crowded with their kinfolks, and crowded with the much-storied "roomers and boarders".

It has only recently been discovered that the master of the house was first employed hereabouts as a laborer in a grain mill later, he was a C.&A.R.R. shops-man. The occupation with which Great-Grandfather Hartnett had been traditionally identified - that of a miner in Stevenson's coal mine - was apparently not taken up until 1880.

There was a mountain in Bloomington when I was young - an ugly, stubby mountain; a mountain built of rust-red coal mine tailings. It was piled up at some distance from the pit-head itself, just across Washington Street from the Union Depot. This was the same mountain up which little Renault tanks charged in 1918to to awe my six-year-old father, and to burst Grandfather Moore's wallet with patriotic enthusiasm; it was the same mountain on which I was strictly enjoined not to climb ("...loosely-packed, dangerous!").

These were the mountains that Maurice Hartnett had made. It had "always" been known that thinner or thicker seams of bituminous (i.e., soft, sulfurous, and dirty-burning) coal could be found almost anywhere in Illinois. However, Eastern, anthracite coal supplies had long been entirely sufficient to America's industrial, transportation, and domestic fuel needs - and the cleaner-burning, "hard" coal would continue to be much preferred. It was only after the Civil War that Illinois coal came into its own. A rapidly industrializing nation would consume any fuel that it could get; and bituminous coal, being gen-

erally easier to mine, came cheaper. Railroads, new and expanded industries, and the hundreds of thousands of immigrants' humble homes made a vastly expanded market for anything that would burn.

In this context, it became fitfully profitable to rip bituminous coal from under Bloomingtonians' feet; and a syndicate was formed for this purpose in the early 1870s, eventually to become the McLean County Coal Company. In later years, the mines primarily employed Bohemians, Hungarians, and Poles; but, in the always-subdued "heyday" of local mineral extraction, the Irishman and Swede was still the handiest beast of burden. My great-grandfather, James Young, and a relative handful of others (the mine was never a major Bloomington employer) drove shallow, usually damp galleries which are said to have fanned out as far east as Allin Street, or beyond.



Maurice Hartnett (1846-1919) and Mary Jordan Moore (1911-1990)

Like most 19th Century coal miners, Maurice Hartnett probably considered himself fortunate to come up alive at the ends of most days. I have said that the McLean County's galleries were shallow and damp, which is also to say that they were more than ordinarily prone to collapse, and to poisonous and explosive gas accumulations. Some of the worst mine disasters in U.S. history have occurred in Illinois pits, but, to the best of my knowledge, the local operation never experienced a notable, multi-fatality accident.

Great-Grandfather Hartnett, however, was wise enough not to go on tempting fate unnecessarily and around 1891, he first retired from the mine. "Morris" Hartnett was generally remembered as...a coal miner who had a small herd of cows and sold milk as a sideline. But he probably preferred to think of himself as a dairy farmer who was once (and every so often) obliged to mine coal for a living.

Actually, my great-grandfather had two known "sidelines." First, he was a hostler. It has always seemed necessary, within the family, to continually emphasize how poor Maurice and Mary Casey Hartnett were in the early years. Presumably, this serves to etch their later accomplishments in much sharper relief; and the "poor mouth" is both a continually serviceable habit, and a hard habit to break. And, of course, by any working definition, the Hartnetts were poor.

One, traditional indicator of my great-grandparents' poverty was the fact that they "...had to take in roomers and boarders," just as others had to take in other peoples' washing, in order to survive. Boarders' fees were a fairly common source of supplemental income for 19th Century Irish-American families, especially for single-parent families. The way in which many of the Irish immigrated - as single people, rather than in family groups - created a need for cheap lodging and victualing at all of the various destination points; to this need, the small boardinghouse answered nicely. Immigrant boys and girls in their hundreds of thousands found their ways to the hundreds of thousands of modest homes earlier established by couplings like the Hartnetts', homes in which a room (or, often, a curtained-off portion of a room) had been set aside for fee-paying lodgers of "...regular life, and temperate habits."

This meant, in translation from the Victorian-

ese, that only the asexual and the abstemious needed apply to become, in effect, a part of the host family. No individual has ever been mentioned by name as having boarded at my great-grandparents' homes, but my mother has told me that she

...long, long ago lost count of the old people who used to come up to me on the street to tell me that they'd eaten their first meals in Bloomington down at my Grandmother Hartnett's. Of course, it's now been quite a while since the last of them did that - most [more likely all] of them are dead now, I suppose.

Although Mother implies that the ex-boarders who introduced themselves to her were of both of the generally-recognized sexes, it is probable that the majority were men. Very likely, Maurice brought many of them home - serially - from the rolling mill, from the C.&A.R.R. shops, and from the mine. Great-Aunt Kitty could personally remember having boarders about, so her parents evidently maintained their boardinghouse "sideline" after they moved to 911 West Jefferson Street, and up into the 1880s.

Four years before that move, on or about November 7, 1876, Great-Grandfather Hartnett closed a deal with his employer of the moment for an L-shaped field lying to the south and west of St. Mary's Cemetery. The price paid - for twenty acres, more or less, of surplus right-of-way - was something over \$100; the surviving memorandum reads:

(Note)

CHICAGO & ALTON RAILROAD COMPANY,

Bloom. Station, Nov. 7, 1876

Recvd. of Maurice Hartnet - one hundred Dollars to apply on Payment of Land; the trade to be Closed this week and papers made out.

Thos. White.

Up into relatively modern times, this acreage was a working dairy farm. There were successive

barns on the premises; but, after 1880 or thereabouts, it became customary to drive the cows into town each evening and to drive them out again each morning to graze through the day. The milking as such was done at the in-town barn, out behind 911 West Jefferson, and the cows passed their nights there.

From the late 1870s, in his spare time, Maurice Hartnett peddled fresh milk to quite a string of homes, hotels, boardinghouses, and restaurants here in Bloomington. He eventually became "...one of the leading men of his business in this city." In the 1880s and 1890s, the handiest Hartnett child was set to ringing a bell from the front porch of 911 West Jefferson each evening - this to signal that the milking had been completed and that the still-steaming, raw milk was ready for distribution to the neighborhood customers. On hearing the bell, mothers in all directions would send off a child with the family milk bucket; these would be filled for a nickel, or a dime.

The milk business required my great-grandfather to rise very early - to complete his milking, to make his deliveries, and to drive the herd out to pasture in the early light, before the starting whistles blew at the railroad shops, or at the mine. The morning milking was done for the Hartnetts' institutional clients - the hotels and restaurants. My great-grandfather was a canny businessman, and he had garnered some relatively lucrative milk supply accounts around town. Pre-dawn deliveries were made by wagon, in standard cans of the type which nowadays do primary service as umbrella stands and planters. Because of this side of the business, the Hartnetts always kept a horse and dray in commission.

On his way home each evening, around 6:00 p.m., he would fetch his cows; with a switch, and, probably, with the help of a dog and his two, little sons, he would drive the "bosses" home along the darkening city streets. Nowadays, of course, none of them would make it through the Morris Avenue - Washington Street intersection alive; but cows, man, boys, and dog plodded along the streets of a Bloomington I never knew, streets which had yet to feel automobile tires. Once home, the cows were milked for the domestic dinner trade. After the last bucket was paid for and on its way, the Hartnetts' family life could begin.

Maurice Hartnett's were certainly "an interest-

ing family of children." Ultimately, they were: Edward (1871-1906), Mary Ellen Jordan (1873-1923), Thomas W. (1876-1942) and Catherine A. (1880-1947). All (Kitty barely) were born at 828 West Jefferson; no stillbirths, nor infant deaths, are known to have occurred in this particular family.

Not surprisingly, very little is known about my eldest Hartnett great-uncle. "Poor Eddie" died at the age of 35 years, and, to put it most diplomatically, seems to have been something of a Hartnett "grey" sheep. Like his younger brother and sisters, Edward Hartnett had some parochial education; this he supplemented with a commercial course at Brown's Business College, in aid of unknown ambitions. By all reports, "poor Eddie" was a cheerful, rather feckless lad, and probably something of a dreamer. He was reputed to have been "...a marvelous dancer; very light on his feet." His youngest sister also left us the implication that there may have been not a little of Mike Casey's instability, not a little of Mike Casey's prodigious taste for ardent spirits, in Edward Hartnett's makeup.

Around 1890, Great-Uncle Eddie ventured forth to Chicago to seek his fortune. His particular pinnacle of fortune (which wasn't really too bad in those days) was a position as a waiter, or as a maitre'd, at Rector's, one of the then-celebrated downtown restaurants. In Chicago, "poor Eddie" boarded with a Mrs. Hill; and, on September 11, 1894, at Holy Name Cathedral, in the presence of a Rev. John Moore and unknown witnesses, he married his landlady's daughter, Alice. As Kitty put it, cryptically, "...When Mama saw Alice, she cried."

Why this was, I will probably never be entirely certain. It was once suggested that the Edward Hartnetts' marriage may not have been entirely, canonically regular; but, latterly, this does not seem to have been the case. It has also been said that Alice Hill Hartnett was unacceptably "long in the tooth"; but the couple's marriage license gives my great-aunt's age as 27 years - only four years older than her bridegroom. It has been said that "poor Eddie" was lured and entrapped into matrimony; that is neither uncommon, nor particularly remarkable. Finally, it seems that Great-Aunt Alice's beauty was less than classic; but, with respect, neither was Great-Grandmother Hartnett's that of which dreams are made. For

whatever, now-unknowable reasons, it is quite clear that Alice Hill was not a particularly welcome addition to the Hartnett family.

Insofar as anyone knows, the Edward Hartnetts were childless. Great-Uncle Eddie lost, or resigned, his position with Rectors; but he remained in Chicago, and he went to work "...elsewhere." For all that was ever said in my mother's hearing, Alice Hill Hartnett unobtrusively dropped off the edge of the earth, sometime between 1894 and 1906. She may have died, she may have divorced "poor Eddie", she may have been divorced, or, perhaps, she simply disappeared. The prodigal son, himself, eventually came back to Bloomington - just in time to die here.

The Bulletin mounted an hour-by-hour watch at the deathbed:

...Edward Hartnett, son of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Hartnett, of 911 West Jefferson street, died at 8 o'clock this morning at Brokaw hospital after an illness with typhoid pneumonia which lasted but a few days. The decedent has been a resident of Chicago for many years, but was feeling badly a few days ago, and came down to the home of his parents here. He was somewhat worse Monday, but his condition was not serious, and when the nature of his ailment was discovered, it was decided to remove him to the hospital. Monday night, about 11 o'clock, his condition grew alarming, and he gradually sank until the end this morning. ...[T]he decedent was an affable, clever young man of genial ways, and held in high esteem by all of those who knew him well. His death at so early an age makes his passing unusually sad.²

No photograph of "poor Eddie" is known to have survived, nor was he ever seen by (nor described to) any living person of my acquaintance. The Pantagraph notes that

...interment was in St. Mary's cemetery. The pallbearers were Thomas and John Gorey, Will and Thomas McDonald, John and William O'Neil, all cousins of the

deceased.³

And, in the nature of such things, everyone thought of the little boy who had dogged the cows along Washington Street, not so many years before.

Grandmother Jordan, from the portion of that old tintype which has always been supposed to portray "herself" as an infant, she seems to have been a happy, healthy child. She, too, attended St. Mary's School, and reportedly received an excellent grounding in the domestic arts from her mother. At the age of 18 years, "Mayme" Hartnett was apprenticed to the Casey Sisters, the highly regarded local seamstresses who ran a made-to-measure dressmaking business out of their home at 401 West Chestnut Street. The one known example of my maternal grandmother's artistry - the baptismal dress in which my mother (1911), my uncle (1914), myself (1944), and my son (1976) were successively christened - testifies, in its intricate, handworked decoration, to the quality of instruction dispensed by the Caseys.....and to the receptivity of their pupil.

Thomas William, the third of these Hartnetts, was known to the family as "Teddy". His was a charming character; and he cultivated the simple, rustic life with continuing success. Perhaps the best epitaph that will ever be given this gentle man came from my father:

...He was one of those extremely fortunate people who really didn't expect too much out of life.....consequently, he was never disappointed. Teddy was one of the most nearly contented individuals I have ever met.

The younger son was the father's understudy in the milk business, first appearing in a city directory as a dairyman in 1905. When, a few years later, Teddy took control of operations into his own hands, both intrinsic and extrinsic factors contributed to a meteoric decline.

Maurice Hartnett, stricken by successive bereavements, a man whose

...advanced age had unfitted him for active business... [, and who]...retired and settled down to enjoy the fruits of his hard work.

Sometime between 1905 and 1907, had had almost all of the good that was in the small-time milk trade. It was his good fortune never to have been overtaken by modern times. In the waning years of my great-grandfather's stewardship, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (an expose of the sanitary precautions not taken at the Chicago Stockyards) horrified carnivorous America, "Typhoid Mary" Mallon was at large in New York City, and the Congress enacted the Pure Food and Drug Act. America's attention was riveted on everything it ate and drank - most particularly "little children's milk."

The process of milk pasteurization was known of, but not generally applied, by the nation's hundreds of thousands of small producers. The proper use of the process entailed some, expensive industrialization and irksome attention to sanitary technique. Udder-to-table suppliers like Maurice Hartnett sincerely and rightly believed that autoclaving milk ruined it from a nutritional standpoint, and pointed to the yawning disproportion between typhoid outbreaks traced to tainted milk vis-a-vis polluted water.

However, the better arguments were unquestionably on the other side. The states early, and uniformly, mandated pasteurization, and imposed strict, step-by-step sanitary controls on dairy operations. This was what really doomed the small operators - Great-Uncle Teddy's deficiencies as a businessman notwithstanding.

Teddy was painfully shy - he met people as infrequently as possible, and he had no presence in the community. He lacked ambition.....totally. A less significant factor in his want of success was his unwillingness to dicker a milk supply deal over "a wee dhrap o'th'crater" in an era when much of the world's humble business was transacted in neighborhood saloons. Almost to the end of his life, this great-uncle was a conscientious, absolute teetotaller. Teddy wore the green button in his lapel from the day he was old enough to swear an oath. While he was never offensive about his abstinence as, for one example, his eminent cousin, Johnny Morrissey, reportedly was, but he did take the matter very seriously:

...Your uncle called me up the other day. He says he has to talk to me '...on a personal matter of the gravest impor-

tance.' So I say, 'Sure, Teddy, come right on up.' Well, I hung up from him and immediately commenced to worry. Did he have a mortal disease? Had they somehow managed to lose all of their money? What? Anyway, it got me in such a state that I had myself a couple of stiff whiskeys, just waiting for the other shoe to fall.

Well, finally, he makes his way downtown and up to my room. He's all dressed up, and looks like he's going to somebody's funeral - possibly his own. We sit down and he fixes those sad eyes of his on me and says, 'Jack, the doctor says my circulation isn't just exactly what it should be these days. It's his opinion that a small glass of wine at bedtimes would be just the thing for me.....fix me right up. Now, you've been in the evil trade, and you're a man of wide experience in such matters. Tell me - your honest opinion, now - do you think this will make me a drunkard?.'

Well! Well! I didn't know whether to laugh, cry, or pitch him out the window. It was a real exercise of the self-control, but I finally told him, 'Aw, no, no, Teddy; I really don't believe that such a tiny bit would give you the taste of it at all.

Well, the sun rose in that long face, and he says, 'Thanks so much, Jack, that was a grrreat worry to me!', and off he goes, happy as a lark. The damn fool!

The narrator of this was my Grandfather Jordan, Teddy's brother-in-law, then going into his third decade of retirement from "the evil-trade". Had he pitched Teddy out of the window, my great-uncle would have landed in Grove Street, in front of the Rogers Hotel. My grandfather was rarely known to have delivered himself at such length on any subject.

Teddy's character was relieved by two, other, known addictions, however - to *The Saturday Evening Post* and to other peoples' cigarettes. As to the latter, he was an unabashed, unrepentant "bummer":

...We'd be sitting around the old wood stove in the kitchen down at 911 (I'd bought Kitty a nice gas range one Christmas: she used it, but they kept the old, pot-bellied model around, 'just in case'), and he'd be forever cadging my cigarettes. One day, I said, 'Say, why don't you turn loose of a little and buy a pack - maybe even a carton - of your own? As tight as you are, old boy, when you're dead and gone, I'll be wearing mink!' He thought that over for a while, then he turned to me, smiled, and said, 'Mink or rabbit, honey, just so's it keeps you warm.'

Out at the field, my great-uncle raised a little corn, a little oats, and a little hay - all for feed. He tended four cows, four pigs, an elderly, sway-backed horse (unimaginatively named "Dobbin"; he could pull a wagon, slowly, on his good days, but he was Teddy's kind of beast), and an unknown, constantly fluctuating number of scrawny chickens. He still milked - he and Kitty drank it raw, and vitamin-rich; any surplus may have been sold to one or another of the local, "sanitary" dairies. He latterly tried his hand at raising vegetables for a less-than-lively, curbside produce market he ran (when the spirit moved him) down in front of 911 West Jefferson. There, surrounded by his baskets, he would sit and chat amiably with the passers-by - occasionally he would sell a couple of tomatoes.

Women terrified Teddy. Once, one of my mother's friends met him driving "Dobbin" in from the field, greeted him, and sought to engage him in some light conversation - this left my bachelor great-uncle so flustered and tongue-tied that, as the woman later told my mother, "...you'd have thought that I was proposing to rape him!" Teddy was as dedicated a celibate as he was an abstainer.

As he usually appeared, Thomas W. Hartnett was a somewhat comical figure. He was tall, spare, and angular. His dress was picturesque, and tended to enhance his gangly appearance. Customarily, from the ground up, he wore high, scuffed boots with the lace surplus wound around their tops, trousers several times out at the knees, a worn, brown mackinaw cinched with a length of rope (doing service for a long-lost belt), and a round cap with a long bill and ear-flaps.

Although his weight varied within a very narrow range (he was thin, like his father), all of his clothes hung slack on him - as did his flesh. Perhaps, like me, he had one leg slightly shorter than the other; all of his surviving photographs show him listing to starboard, perched on the shorter leg. His face was cadaverous; his hair present, but unremarkable.

The fourth (and last) of these, particular Hartnetts persistently haunts these pages - as the interpreter of so many others to remote posterity. Catherine Amatus Hartnett, whom I supposedly knew, was born at 828 West Jefferson on April 4, 1880, and died in Mennonite Hospital on October 8, 1947. In everything save the technicality of her marital status, Great-Aunt Kitty was the antithesis of the old maid.

Very likely, had her mother lived out a normal span, Kitty would have married. It is said that she had her share of proposals - good proposals; and there was a brief period, from 1919 to 1923, when she at least entertained the possibility. In



Catherine A. Hartnett (1880-1947) posing with her Willys-Knight automobile

the event, however, she gently spurned however many suitors in favor of a life of service - service to her widowed father, service to her bachelor brother, and, later, service to her elder sister's two, semi-orphaned children. While she was not "the only mother [Mary C. and John E. Jordan] ever knew", Catherine A. Hartnett was, in every good sense save the biological, the mother to them throughout their years of growth.

Far from a prototypical, domestic drudge, my Hartnett great-aunt was stylish and gay. In a stu-

dio portrait made in the "Teens" she appears perfectly acceptable-looking and (to the not overly generous eye) rather striking. She was not, as her elder sister is reputed to have been, a local beauty finalist - few are. Kitty had a quick, keen mind and tongue, a ready wit, and a mordant (and, occasionally, Rabelaisian and ribald) sense of "black Irish" humor. She was a demon traveler and an indefatigable visitor, forever whirling off to Chatham, to Springfield, to South Downs, to Chenoa, and to Chicago like a small, bespectacled dervish. She and "the Mary" Fortier would visit back-and-forth; for weeks at a time; on one of her northern swings, she was involved in a fender-bender in the Chicago Loop which landed her in a hospital overnight - with a gash in her forehead ("...looked like a wounded pirate."), and several broken, cracked, or bruised ribs. She was visited there by one of "the Mary's" friends, a woman with a brogue equally thick, who

...busted in, boo-hooing all over the place like a banshee, and screeched at me, 'Ooooooh, Kitty, y'poor, poor darling!' Thim dhorty bahstids.....n'you such a noble driver!'. I laughed so hard that I sprung my ribs all over again, and had to stay in another night.

My small person was oft entrusted to the "noble driver" who,

...used to descend in her latest, little black Chevrolet and scoop you up to go around on her errands with her. With a screech of tires and a grinding of gears, off you'd go - you in your little car seat with the steering wheel - jabbering back and forth at one another. She often told me that she much preferred your company - that your conversation usually made more sense than that of her adult friends.

And, perhaps fifteen years earlier, Kitty's nephew often "borrowed" her big, Willys-Knight touring car for his increasingly frequent romantic escapades; but

I always took care to push it out of the garage, and to push it well down the street, before I risked starting it.

Providentially, someone thought to give my manic great-aunt a little Brownie camera, sometime in the "Teens". This lifted the Hartnetts, Jordans, Caseys, Cotters, and Dorans of a bygone era out of the artificial milieu of studio photography. Kitty wasn't the best photographer; but the little camera was her faithful companion on her infra-familial rounds.

Kitty's religious specialty was the Corporal Works of Mercy visiting the sick, and, in particular, burying the dead. Margaret Downey has told me that my great-aunt paid daily, sprightly visits to her bedridden mother, Catherine Walsh Twomey (1856-1946), her husband, Thomas (1856-1934), was my Great-Great-Uncle Billy Hartnett's wife's brother. Wild horses couldn't keep her from a wake.

A modified version of the traditional Irish wake still survived in my greataunt's day. Many were still laid out in the late home (as my Great-Grandmother Watson was, as recently as 1932). There was food and drink of the latter, less than in the older days, and certainly less than in the "ould country" - and hour upon hour of good "gab" for everyone. The good, cathartic psychology (and the impeccable, prophetic theology) of the Irish wake was never appreciated by the Irish and Irish-American clergy. Priests of my great-grandfathers' time focused upon the "dhrinking" and the roistering, and were appalled by the occasional practice of "playin' little jokes on th'corse." For this reason, among others, the Irish wake gradually faded to a pale carbon of its former self. But, in Kitty's era, a wake was still grand entertainment - not yet a mumbling-and-fumbling purgatory.

...and at 9:30 o'clock from Holy Trinity church. There was a large number of friends of the deceased present to pay the final tribute of love and respect. On account of the desire of the family and the deceased, flowers were omitted. The solemn mass for the dead was spoken by Rev. Monahan, and Rev. N. Weldon preached the funeral sermon. He paid a high tribute to the womanhood and motherhood of the deceased, and spoke of her admirable traits as she had shown them in her daily life.⁴

The pall bearers were Messers. James Gorey, Thomas Gorey, John O'Neil, William O'Neil, Thomas MacDonald and William MacDonald. All of these were nephews of the deceased, some coming from out of the city to be present at the obsequies. The interment took place in St. Mary's cemetery.⁵

To this, I have already added almost all that I can. Of this woman's person and personality, very little is known. The foregoing is standard obituarial "boilerplate" of its time, and then in quite general use. The last century was not an efflorescent age for women.

During the forty-year lacuna between surviving photographs, Maurice Hartnett undoubtedly changed in many ways; but he seems to have changed least in his physical appearance. Although my mother insisted that her maternal grandfather was "...a big man, tall, a six-footer," the surviving photographic evidence indicates that he was of average height, and of below-average weight for his era. Along his way, he had acquired long, white whiskers.

Great-Grandfather Hartnett was the only grandparent my mother ever knew, but she has said that he was a "Go 'way, y'bother me!" sort of grandfather who largely ignored his two, less immediate descendants. To the best of his granddaughter's recollection, Maurice Hartnett was not a teller of tales, nor even much of a talker:

...he mostly grunted at John and I. You know - 'Hello, Grandpa!,' acknowledged by, Harummmph.'. I suppose he loved usin his way. He did most of his talking to Papa.

Like most of the emigrants, he enjoyed good, general health, and he was fortunate to deteriorate almost imperceptibly through the years. What eventually killed Maurice Hartnett was a sands-of-the-hourglass accumulation of the desirabilities of old age, possibly made more immediately lethal by an undiagnosed case of Spanish influenza.

The *Daily Bulletin* went on to describe the man as one who '...was well liked because he liked other people. He always took an active part in the things of public welfare, and was a staunch

Democrat; and he was borne to rest by an unmistakably Celtic sextet - Matthew Ryan, John Kumley, John Sullivan, James Sweeney, John O'Connor, and Michael Mulhern.

I have spoken of the "poor mouth". To the undoubted discomfiture of his secretive heirs, the *Daily Pantagraph* on August 13 obligingly inventoried the Hartnett estate, as it stood in 1919, for the curious, and for posterity:

...the will of Maurice Hartnett of Bloomington was admitted to probate yesterday. There is realty listed at \$16,500, and personal property valued at \$24,000. The old homestead (i.e., 828 West Jefferson), located at the corner of Jefferson and Howard streets, is willed to the daughter, Catherine; and the present homestead at 911 West Jefferson street is bequeathed to the son, Thomas W. Hartnett. The property adjoining the present home is left to the daughter, Mary Jordan. The remainder of the real estate (i.e., the field) is left to the son, Thomas.

Out of the personal property, the sum of \$16,000 goes to the daughter, Catherine; and the remainder is to be divided equally between Mary Jordan and Thomas. The latter is nominated executor without bond.

Multiplying these figures by a factor of at least five (to reflect current values; even a factor of ten mightn't be out of line), t'wasn't at all bad for the youngest son of a Mullaghareirk herdsman. Great-Grandfather Hartnett's success lay not in making much, but in spending remarkably little and in investing small sums wisely. His cautious frugality, more than any of his inventoried assets, was the precious legacy.

After my Grandmother Jordan's death, in 1923, the Hartnetts and her survivors more-or-less merged into one, extended family. The adults, by that time, had nothing in particular to do, no hours to keep, and no deadlines to meet; but they all managed to keep busy. Teddy had his crops and his management of superannuated farm animals; Grandfather Jordan made more out of farm management than most, shot pool at the K of C, followed the "Tchi-caw-go" White Sox

intently, and worried over his children; Kitty added surrogate motherhood to her already busy schedule, working at it diligently, sometimes hilariously, always lovingly.

Kitty's wake pace picked up considerably in the 1920s and 1930s. First, the emigrant generation (always saving the seemingly indestructible "Aunt Kate" McDonald) wound itself up; then, the elders of Kitty's and Teddy's own generation - in which they, themselves, were comparative youngsters began to die, foremost in the Jordan families. By the time my father married into the family, in 1934, and began to chauffeur the mourners around, he reasonably suspected that he had allied himself to a family laboring under some sort of an ancient curse:

...They were dropping on all sides there for a while, like flies. At times, it was almost a 'wake-of-the-week' proposition.

If, as my Grandfather Jordan always stoutly maintained,

...Those relatives of your mother's are just grand ones for the weeping and cater-wauling - got their kidneys turned upside down! Great kissers, too! Hello, goodbye, on general principles - always kissing one another! Kissing and crying!

then the Hartnett-Caseys never wanted opportunities to demonstrate their traits.

My father was always something of a curiosity at these teary gatherings of aging men and women - men and women who, like Kitty, knew one another and their connections unto distant generations. No one could place him; but he would obligingly answer to "Dr. Jordan," to "Dr. Hartnett" and sometimes even to "Dr. Casey." From his perspective, at least, "the kissing" had its use - my mother would precede him along the casket-side lines, and those marked with her bright, red lipstick were the survivors, relatives, and principal mourners.

On November 25, 1942, Great-Uncle Teddy quietly imploded. He didn't really die of anything specific, but, like his father before him, just eventually collected too many "desibilities". Since there wasn't anything much to be done for him, he was spared hospitalization; towards the

inevitable end, any professional fussiness gave place to the loving of his sister, of his niece, and of the tender-hearted "Mag" O'Neil McManus, his first cousin:

...of course, he knew that he was dying; but that didn't seem to bother him a bit. When he finally sensed that it was time to say his goodbyes, he had the sweetest, most peaceful expression on his face. He just looked up at me, and he smiled, and he said, 'Goodbye, honey, you've been an awful good girl.' Then, after a little while, he just died.

I cannot possibly improve on my father's epitaph for Thomas W. Hartnett, except, perhaps, to suggest that his may have been the greatest success story of them all. Teddy succeeded in satisfying himself - and that is truly rare. It could be said that he never made an independent dime; but, he was fortunate in never having needed to. He was a happy man.

Naturally, Kitty missed her brother keenly. They had grown used to one another, and they were a uniquely complementary pair. To the extent that Teddy had any influence on his younger sister's thinking, that served to soften her, to smooth the edges of her opinions and judgments. It was always he, for example, who would end up saying:

...Aw, now, Kit. We may as well give it to 'em; we've all we'll ever need, and who knows -they just might not pack it down a rathole this time.

For public consumption, of course, Kitty had the harder head.

Beginning in 1942-43, the last of the Hartnetts born began to spend her winters with her niece, at the opposite end of Jefferson Street. At the first hints of spring, however, Kitty always grew restive. She was eager to be off to "911", where she knew her way around. Spring was the time to hang the wren houses and get them "rented", the time to get her garden and flower beds spaded. In successive years, she would cadge ever greater armloads of flower cutting and bulbs from her "shirttail" cousin, Gene Twomey,

...Oh, no, Gene! No! I really just couldn't! Welllll ... Of course, they are awfully pretty this year, aren't they? Welllll

After my arrival, my great-aunt, faced with a vacuum, graduated to surrogate grandmotherhood. By now, the "old maid" considered herself an expert on children, being stuffed full of standard "old wives' tales" and the conflicting opinions of her circle of spinsters and old "widdy women". She delivered herself unrestrainedly on the then-popular "scheduled" feeding of infants and discipline,

He's hungry! FEED him!

playpens - How could you?!? Like a baboon in some zoo!! Come here, honey, your Auntie'll get you out! Sometimes I wonder about you, Mary!

Whenever I'd have to slap your hands for something, she'd look at me like I was the lowest form of life - like I was something that had just lately crawled out from under a rock, or like you would at something that's gone bad at the bottom of a garbage can. Some times she wouldn't speak to me for days afterwards, but just go around muttering to herself 'Monster! I never! The very idea!

and even on the sensations of surrogate grandmotherhood:

You know, Mary, you and John are my own dear sister's children, but I will never love anything in this life like I love this baby.

Obviously, my great-aunt had impeccable taste.

As I have previously noted, Kitty and I went many places together. We went to a carnival; we sat together on a pile of dirt - a two-year-old and a 65-year-old - and watched Mr. Pontarelli and his horses lay the big storm sewer down East Empire Street; and we went on many, many unremembered little jaunts in her little, black Chevrolet.

Catherine A. Hartnett was fortunate in having been ambushed by death. She went into Mennonite Hospital for some routine oxygen treatments for her asthma - these, coupled with a thitherto-unsuspected cardiac weakness, triggered a fatal seizure. As Dr. Frank Deneen sagaciously told my mother at the time, Kitty would have somehow managed old age and invalidism - but neither would have suited her.

In the extremely unlikely event that there was time for a last reflection, I suspect that Kitty might have used it to wonder whether everyone would have as good a time at her wake as she had had at others'. The "standing room only" crowd at Flynn's throughout the day and evening of October 10, 1947, would certainly have gratified her.

A good writer conceives his throw-away paragraph first. Thus, from the capital "O" of "Once upon a time,....." onwards, the narrative has a known destination - each, succeeding word has a thesis to sustain. Quite apart from the inconvenient fact that genealogy is an open-ended science, however, I have always thought to leave the Hartnetts, the Caseys, the Cotters, et.al. more-or-less as I found them.....as ephemeral, and as delightful, as an Irish morning's mist.

And so I shall.



"Wild Mike" Casey

"Wild Mike" Casey's active life as a Bloomington town drunk was neither archetypical nor apocryphal. He represents only himself, but honest history cannot leave him entirely out of account.

Mike was born in County Tipperary, Ireland, most likely in the early 1840s. He is supposed to have been hired off a New York wharf. . . as a substitute for someone whose number had come up in the Civil War draft. He didn't necessarily develop his bad

habit in the Union Army, but that wouldn't have been at all uncommon. If there was any time afterwards that he was good for anything, no one in his family ever mentioned it.

Even as a town drunk, Michael Casey wasn't exceptional. In his era, Bloomington was populace enough to have a number of those, including one or two others related to me. By all accounts, he wasn't a mean or obstreperous drunk, and there was never a wife or children depending on a share of any money he spent for the cheap whiskey he drank. He was a great shame upon my pious great-grandmother and his other sisters. It can't have been pleasant to have one's brother headlined as a madman in the newspaper that all of the literate Irish in McLean County unfailingly read. But, as the *Bulletin* reporter left-handedly conceded, people liked "Wild Mike" . . . in a tolerant, head-shaking sort of way. The police knew him best, and,

many of them being Irish themselves, had sympathy for the weakness of a "drunken man."

The Irish are grand and expansive dreamers, and how much they drink is frequently correlated with how many of their dreams have died, and how hard the dying's been. Who can know what Michael Casey dreamt? The only certain thing is that none of his dreams lived as long as he did. Let the earth rest lightly on him, too.

Bloomington Daily Bulletin - June 5,
1899

"CASEY INSANE

The Irrepressible Mike Found Insane
This Afternoon In The County Court

Mike Casey, the irrepressible, has reached a point in his career where Bloomington is apt to hear but very little of him for a long time. For the past eight months (that is, during the time when he was out of jail), his principal occupation has been that of getting full. He was sentenced a few days ago to the county jail for sixty days, having been out but a few days when he was arrested and fined by Magistrate Morrissey. The long period of dissipation has told on the old man's condition, and during the past few days he got so bad at the county jail that it became necessary to have him tried for insanity. He was adjudged insane this afternoon in the county court and will be taken to Jacksonville.

Mike has buffeted against the bollocks and rocks of misfortune for many years, and was one of the regular patrons of the police station. He was a good-hearted, happy fellow, but he loved the flowing bowl, and resorted to its soothing tendencies too often. His face and figure were familiar in the police court, and sentence has been passed on him for drunk and disorderly with great regularity for many years.

1. *Bloomington Daily Pantagraph* March 19, 1939
2. *Bloomington Daily Bulletin* March 13, 1906
3. *Bloomington Daily Pantagraph* March 1906
4. *Bloomington Daily Pantagraph*, August, 1906
5. *Bloomington Daily Bulletin* August 14, 1906

Reminiscences of Julia Larkin Sullivan about St. Joseph's Academy, Bloomington, Illinois 1918 -1922

from a 1990 interview with Jean McCrossin

I was raised in the country east of Towanda about five miles. I was the oldest of a family of six. I graduated from the grade school - country school Phoenix they called it. We had a large school. There were as many as 39 in the school because we had a district and a half and we had a rather new large building so I was used to being around quite a few people.

It came time to go to high school. We lived a long way from Towanda, where we would have gone to high school and it was not accredited. Also the method of getting there would have been by horse and buggy which would have taken far too long in the mornings and evenings because the roads were so bad a goodly part of the time. So I came down to Bloomington. A couple of the girls from Merna, where I went to church, who were older than I had already come down to the convent to go to school. So that was just where I was going to go. We came down and made arrangements. We were to have a navy blue dress for everyday and a black dress for Sunday - very simple with a white collar on it, and they were pretty much the same but not uniforms. They were just a navy blue dress that we had and most of us wore white collars. We had several that could be put on the dress and when we went home they got washed. The same applied to the white dresses.

There were 68 boarders, including the grade school children. And their wouldn't have been more than a hundred going to school there, I think. There were a lot of day scholars, and lot of them were non-Catholics. And a lot of them were only children. They wore their own natural clothes and we liked to see the styles they had. They took part in everything.

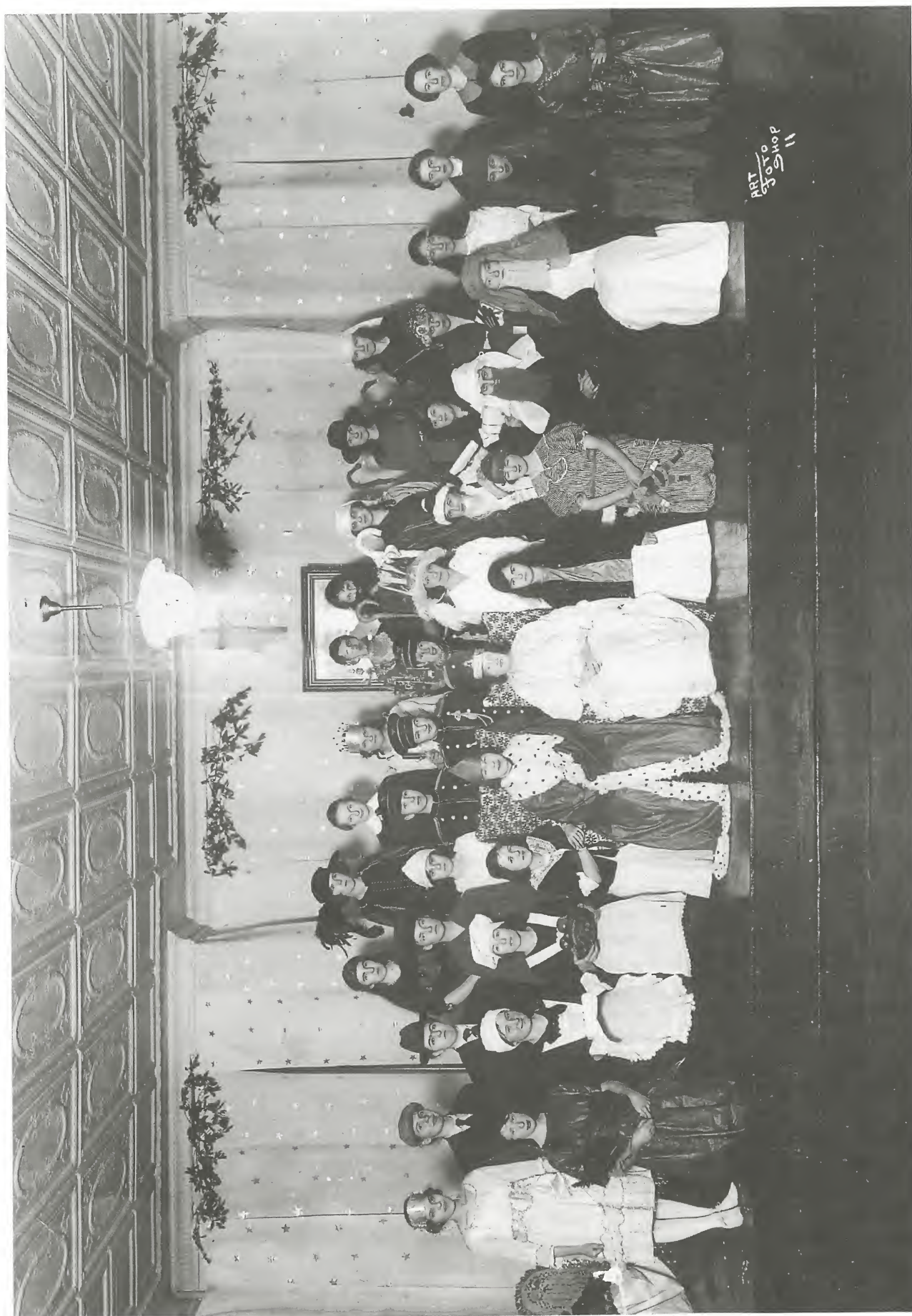
We watched the people go to St. Mary's and

afterward, I don't think then, but in years afterward, we wondered why we couldn't have boarded at the convent and gone to the same high school. They had sisters for each department in our school at the time and they also had them over at the other school. At that time the high school - St. Mary's - was on the southwest corner of the block that is now a parking lot for Trinity. That was the grade school and the high school both in one building for the parish. They didn't build a new high school until 1928. My sister Marie graduated from the last class at St. Joseph's Academy and my brothers - two of them - graduated with the last class from St. Mary's. Then they called it Trinity High School and they moved it across the street in '28 in the fall. Anyway, we had what was called a private education. It was supposed to be very well done and I think that everybody turned out very well and most people in those days were pretty efficient when they got out of school. They studied.

We had a bath every Saturday and we stood in line to get our turn to get the bathtub. There were three bathtubs for the girls and at the time there were about 68 girls at the convent.

I got to school and I don't know how many were in my freshman class but a couple of the girls had been in my class in the country school, Marian Carmody and Teresa Dalton. They were now day scholars. There were eight of us who graduated.

We had all our meals at the convent. Some of them were pretty good. I didn't expect much so I wasn't disappointed, but some of the girls were disappointed. They couldn't have much more at home than we did. There wasn't too much food ever. Usually there would be extra portions on the platter. There were two platters for each



St. Joseph's Academy theatrical, c1923

table. There were long tables in the refectory. For something the girls liked especially well, the girls would ask for "first extra" on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday because we knew what our meals were going to be. They weren't the same every day, so we respected the requests for those certain days. Our dining room was called the girls' refectory and we sat at the same place most of the time. Though the meals were not overly much there was always at least one extra piece of the meat that had been fried or whatever kind of meat there was for supper and that was "first extra." It got to be kind of a joke but we tried to keep track of when we were to get the "first extra." One little nun did the cooking. She was a pretty little woman. It was hard. She made the bread and she made lots of it, because I suppose there would have been close to thirty nuns.

Of course, because we boarded and roomed at the academy and we had beds on the fourth and the fifth floors. The little beds were surrounded by curtains and the little rooms were called alcoves. They had two double beds at the west end of the fourth floor and the two double beds were head to head. My sister and I had one of them and a cousin and her sister had the other for two years.

We had recreation for an hour every night after supper, but before supper we went on long walks with a sister at the head and a sister at the end of the group. Before the walk we could go downstairs and get some homemade bread and syrup. The bread was either brown or white and it was real good. The sisters were good bakers. The girls walked in a double line and

each nun at the front and back of the line had two girls for partners. Then we would come home and have an hour study before supper. We sat for meals at the same place for as much as two or three weeks and then once in awhile we would have "fruit-basket upset," so we would sit at a different table.

We went to practice music any free hour of the day and we had music lessons once a week. You could graduate from music from taking lessons from a music nun. My sister graduated from music. We had the lessons mostly on Saturday, but if you had a free hour you could

ACADEMY OF ST. JOSEPH

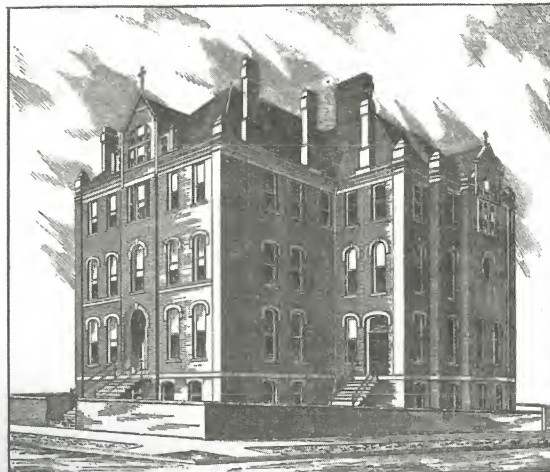
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Advertisement, 1892

have your lesson during the week. There were always plays and operettas that tried to include the entire student body. The English teacher gave public speaking lessons. Her name was Miss Clark.

After our supper we had another hour of study and then we went to the chapel upstairs on 3rd floor and had prayers and we were in bed by nine o'clock. We were up early in the morning. We went to chapel for prayers and then to Mass at the same place and then to breakfast. Then we went upstairs to make our beds and straighten our rooms. The nuns did our laundry. It was all marked. They all wore the habit at that time and there was much laundry, white wool. Everyone had a laundry box in the basement and the bags were washed each week. Some girls worked in the laundry and some in the kitchen. Each nun had her own chores and there were all the front rooms to be dusted.

The Dominican Order bought the house across the street from the convent. It was called Milner house and the area was a whole block square and it had this big old fashioned house and that was the grade school at the time I was there. We had almost as many day scholars as we had boarders. The grade school children, who were boarders, lived in that Milner house. Our science department was over there. We had chemistry and physics there. The sisters who taught in St. Mary's, which was in the same block as the convent, all stayed at the convent, and taught over at St. Mary's.

Courses

We had a lot of history, we had Latin and English and science, physics. I didn't take chemistry there but I had to take it when I went to ISNU. It would have been easier for me if I had taken it in high school. I wasn't going to do anything with it. We had Latin and French. We had an Irish sister who taught Latin. She got a little excited about it once in a while when we didn't do it right, but we learned and it helped our English a lot. French, history and Latin and English and science, that's about what it was. We also had algebra and geometry in the first years. Now that's all the math I took. I don't know if they had any other or not. I believe they taught advanced algebra.

Recreation

Now on the weekends that we stayed there, which were most of them, we could go downtown on Friday afternoon or we could on Saturday afternoon. At that time, of course, the stores weren't open on Sunday. If we didn't go anyplace else on Friday afternoon, we went down to Shelper's and got candy. They had the old, good candy that was homemade and Dorothy Shelper was the daughter of the man who had the Home Sweet Home Mission here in Bloomington. And as I remember it at the time it was down on South Main Street, east side of the street. And we liked Dorothy real well. His place of candy was just in the next block south from our school and was easy to get to and they had some kind of candy that we all liked. We didn't have to be accompanied by a nun when we went like that. We went in groups. We weren't about to get in any mischief.

We knew. I remember when we were going home one time for vacation. The sisters told us not to "dry clean." They didn't want us to go into the station restroom and put on lipstick or powder. We were supposed to be natural. I remember when the first girl got her hair cut short, they were just aghast. One thing that I was really surprised and amazed at in the pictures I have here was how good the girls' hair looked. Nobody curled her hair and nobody had permanents. I don't know how our hair looked so good. At home I think little girls' mothers would wind their hair up. I had real curly hair at the time and I just didn't do a thing to it. And I don't think any of the girls did. We were pretty much of same ilk. Everybody almost did the same thing.

We were expected to do the right thing. Being country girls, we didn't know anything else. We had a good rapport with the nuns and with each other. You'd do just about anything for any of them, except give up your extra thing at the table that you planned for a week or a month ahead whatever it was.

Except when it rained walks were our physical education. We even walked in cold weather. We had nice warm clothes. People wore mittens and caps in that day and so did we. We went out often in a northwest direction. There's a tunnel that was open at that time underneath the railroad. I think we went into it from Chestnut Street and we would go in there and come out the other end.

There wasn't anything particularly nice about it, it wasn't all that clean, but it was kind of interesting to go underneath the street. We weren't a bit afraid we would meet somebody in there.

Entertainments

We went to anything big that came to town, and I can't name any of them, but there were all kinds of orchestras that would come and there were plays and we were always asked to those. Some of them would be at the Coliseum, some of them would be at the Chatterton Opera House and some of them would be at Bloomington High School. We were always asked to those and we got to go. Sisters did not go with us. They were not supposed to go out at night and they didn't.

We enjoyed getting out to go to those things, we put on our best clothes. And that makes me think we wore navy blue dresses through the week and black dresses on Sunday. That was about all the clothes we needed.

We wore our uniforms when we went to these events. We were kind of regimented and we had a certain block that we would get to sit in. I remember going to Bloomington High School many times because we were invited to all those things and that was good; otherwise I do not know where we would have gone for entertainment. We did not have - as I remember - we did not have speakers come to our schools and there were a lot of things, there were even things that went on - well, maybe I am wrong, I don't know when the Consistory was built we used to go there once in a while.

Living at St. Joseph's

Once in a while there was some girl - well, I don't know what she had done, she had done nothing serious, but some of them liked to talk to the sisters at night after we went to bed and they were just pugnacious girls, they hadn't done a single thing, they would liked to have been scolded, but sometimes they came up the stairs and made some noise. As we came up the stairs our shoes were looked at to see if they were polished at the top or bottom of the stairs and those were steep steps. And that was a requirement that our shoes would be polished. We polished them on the back of our stockings, black cotton stockings.

In our alcoves we had a bowl and pitcher for water, they would be valuable now, and that is

how we cleaned up at night. We had a bath once a week on Saturday. We had, I think it was three, bath rooms, 3 bath tubs. There were two on the fourth floor and one on the third floor and it was there was a kind of private bedroom that was there in case any of the nuns were sick. I am sure that is what it was for. And one day a girl was sick and she was put in that private room and she got smallpox. She had been exposed to them some other place. She was in the dormitory in the bed next to me and I got the smallpox.

I had five brothers and sisters at home and they had never been vaccinated and so my father took them to Bloomington three times before they got any vaccine from Springfield. It just didn't come up. He took them some place to eat and brought them home. And then in the afternoon they ate somewhere, but I don't know where they would have gone to eat at that time. They didn't have any quick service places like they do now.

I was sent home when I had the smallpox. My parents had to get the vaccine. We had two living rooms and then the bedroom was off that and I was there. I was sick, the sickest before I went home. And I broke out right after I got home. Nobody else got them. I don't know if the vaccine will take effect that quickly, but I wasn't home when I had the fever. This girl, I really didn't care for her so much after that.

Art Classes

Not everyone took art. It cost extra, and that was a problem with some people, and some people didn't have any desire for it at all. Some of our mothers thought it was the thing to do and that is what we did. Some of us painted china. Most everybody painted some china. I remember I painted a nice little shaped bowl, then salt and pepper and sugar and creamer. My sister painted a set of dishes, a luncheon set. I think there were four plates and cups and saucers. It was all mother of pearl and came out real blue. Mine had green designs around them and they had gold and they all had to be fired. We had a kiln in the building and that had to be fired. And I think we had to burnish that gold. And it was pretty to see the china.

Sister Remberta taught china painting. She was there all the time I was there. Before that there was a Sister Aquino and she was a little sister from Chicago. She had a big family in Chicago

and she taught here many years. The convent had opened a long time before I got there.

Mrs. Deane lived on Center Street about in the 1100 block of North Center. She had a little boy, Joseph, who grew up in the studio and we watched him. She had a bed there for him and she would go after materials for Sister and she did all the firing. They had a parrot in the studio and in the nighttime they brought him in the house, into the room. He was in a cage, but he talked all the time and the children, the students who went to St. Mary's, teased him, but he didn't ever get mad. He would call several names of people he had learned, like Jim, or Mary or something like that and Polly wants a cracker. He would come out with that all the time. And the students from the day school were very interested in that. And the little boy liked him. I presume he belonged to Mrs. Deane.

We did a lot of water colors. Some people did oil painting. I didn't do any oil painting. My sister made a fruit picture, an oil painting. We took a picture and sometimes we had to enlarge it. We sketched it in on a cardboard and then we tried to put some paint on it to make it look like the picture. We had two lessons a week. They always looked better after the lesson because Sister took a hand in it at that time. She had a better eye than we did.

But, by and large, they came out pretty well. And then there was a man in the block just south of the convent on Main Street - he framed most all of the pictures. He framed some of them just

beautifully, some frames were more expensive than others and they were prettier than others. It was strange to see the two pictures with different frames, they looked so different.

But since we only had the one nun teacher and the same people took from her, a lot of our houses have the same pictures. Everybody had a wolf picture', a lot of people had a dog picture, a lot of people had roses and a lot of people had something nobody else had. It was just interesting to see. And some people painted a lot of white china with gold rims on it and all the china that was painted was Bavarian.

Graduation

Our graduation was held in the chapel at the school. Most of the students stayed for graduation, I think. We had a priest who was from Merna say the Mass and give the sermon and he was in the picture with our class. There were three in our class who were from Merna so that nuns said it would be a good idea to ask Father Fitzpatrick and we were all satisfied. We did not have a brunch after graduation. We went home as soon as we had our picture taken. We had it taken in the yard across the street from where the convent is in that lot that had the Milner house on it, and there was a nice background of trees and there were benches in the yard for people to sit on in the evening if they wanted to. That is the same lot where Trinity High School is built.

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